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# LIPPINCOTT'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## THE WHITE ALLEY

BY

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### CHAPTER I.

#### WHITE BIRCHES

ALMOST before the big motor-car stopped, the girl sprang out. Lap-  
robes flung aside, veils flying, gauntlets flapping, she was the  
incarnation of youth, gayety, and modernity.

"Oh, Justin," she cried, as she ran up the steps of the great portico,  
"we've had *such* a time! Two punctures and a blow-out! I thought  
we'd never get here!"

"There, there, Dorothy, don't be so—so precipitous. Let me greet  
your mother."

Dorothy Duncan pouted at the rebuke, but stood aside as Justin  
Arnold went forward to meet the older lady.

"Dear Mrs. Duncan," he said, "how do you do? Are you tired?  
Have you had a bothersome journey? Won't you sit here?"

Mrs. Duncan took the seat offered, and then Arnold turned to  
Dorothy. "Now it's your turn," he said, smiling at her. "I have to  
correct your manners when you insist on being so unobservant of the  
preferment due to your elders."

"Oh, Justin, don't use such long words! Are you glad to see me?"

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Dorothy was unwinding yards of chiffon veiling from her head and neck, and was becoming hopelessly entangled in its coils; but her lovely, piquant face smiled out from the clouds of light blue gauze as from a summer sky.

Arnold observed her gravely. "Why do you jerk at that thing so?" he said. "You'll spoil the veil; and you're making no progress in removing it, if that's your purpose."

"Justin! You're so tiresome! Why don't you help me, instead of criticising? Oh, never mind, here's Mr. Chapin; he'll help me—won't you?"

The azure-framed face turned appealingly to a man who had just come out of the house. No male human being could have refused that request, and perhaps Ernest Chapin was among those least inclined.

"Certainly," he said, and with a few deft and deferential touches he disentangled the fluttering folds, and was rewarded by a quick, lovely, flashing smile. Then the girl turned again to Arnold.

"Justin," she said, "why can't you learn to do such things? How can I go through life with a man who can't get my head out of a motor-veil?"

"Don't be foolish, Dorothy. I supposed you quite capable of adjusting your own toggery."

"And must I always do everything I am capable of doing? 'Deed I won't! By the way, Justin, you have n't kissed me yet."

She lifted her lovely, laughing face, and, a trifle awkwardly, Arnold bent and kissed the rose-leaf cheek.

"H'm," said Dorothy. "Not very lover-like, but I suppose you're embarrassed at the audience." She flashed another smile at Ernest Chapin, and then said, "Come, Mother, let's go to our rooms and—Oh, my gracious, there's Leila Duane! Hello, girlie!"

Another motor came purring up, and a tall, graceful girl stepped out and joined the party on the veranda. With a calm correctness of manner, she greeted her host, Justin Arnold, and acknowledged an introduction to his secretary, Ernest Chapin. Then, turning to Mrs. Duncan and Dorothy, she chatted gayly after the manner of reunited friends.

"Where's Miss Wadsworth?" she said presently, turning to Arnold.

"She will see you at tea-time," he replied. "She begs you will excuse her until then."

Miss Duane nodded to her French maid, who stood waiting, and, leading the ladies into the great hall, Arnold left them in charge of the housekeeper, who showed them to their rooms.

White Birches was one of the finest old places in America, and took its name from the trees which covered a large part of its ten-acre estate.

The house, built by the grandfather of its present owner, was old-

fashioned without being antique, but it lent itself readily to modern additions and improvements, and was entirely comfortable, if not strictly harmonious in design. Its original over-ornateness had been somewhat softened by time, and its heavy architecture and huge proportions gave it a dignity of its own. Justin Arnold had added many ells and wings during his occupancy, and the great spreading pile now possessed a multitude of rooms and apartments furnished in the magnificent style which had always represented the Arnold taste.

North of New York City, on Washington Heights, it was scarcely near enough to the metropolis to be called a suburb; yet, easily accessible by steam, trolley, or motor-car, White Birches was a delightful home for its occupants, and most hospitable to the stranger within its gates.

"Within its gates" is an appropriate phrase, for the only entrance to White Birches was an immense stone archway provided with heavy iron gates. The entire estate was enclosed by a high stone wall, on top of which was further protection from intruders by means of broken glass bottles embedded in cement. This somewhat foreign feature gave a picturesque effect, and the old stone wall, built nearly a century before, was partly covered with trailing vines and tangled shrubbery. But it was intact and formed an effective barrier against burglars or other marauders. The great gates were locked every night with almost as much ceremony as the lord of an ancient castle would draw his portcullis, and though this excessive precaution was rather because of tradition than fear of present danger, Justin Arnold adhered wherever possible to the customs of his ancestors.

His grandfather, perhaps because of the other manners of his times, had an almost abnormal fear of burglars. His somewhat crude burglar-alarm had been replaced in later years by Justin's father, and this in turn by Justin himself, so that at present White Birches was fitted out with the most elaborate and efficacious burglar-alarm that had yet been invented. Every door and window, every cellar bulkhead and every opening of any sort, was protected by the tentacles of this far-reaching contrivance. The upper half of every window was further protected by a heavy wire screen or grating, which permitted the upper sash to be raised or lowered for ventilation without setting off the alarm.

But when the alarm was set on, and this Justin Arnold attended to himself every night, no external door or window, with the exception noted, could be opened without the alarm being sounded all through the house, in the stables and the garage, where several men servants slept, and in the gatekeeper's lodge. The great iron gates were also connected with the alarm, and although the precaution seemed out of all proportion to the possible danger, it was a tradition in the house of Arnold, and was scrupulously observed.

Also there was a night watchman, who must needs punch his time-clocks at various stations in the grounds every half-hour.

There were telegraph and telephone wires, all laid in underground conduits, to prevent their being cut, and these gave quick communication to the police or the fire department in case of need. But though all this sounds complicated and ponderous, yet so complete and perfectly adjusted was the alarm, that the master of the house could turn it on in a moment just before retiring at night, and the butler could turn it off in the morning, and thus it troubled nobody.

White Birches could scarcely be called a cheerful place, for the grounds were densely wooded, the gardens broken up by ravines and rocky gorges, and the tangle of undergrowth in many parts so thick and dark that the whole effect was lacking in sunlight and cheer. But Dorothy Duncan had firmly made up her mind that when she was mistress there, as she would be soon, there would be a general clearing out on many of the acres. In determining this, she reckoned without her host and future husband; but Dorothy's was a sanguine nature, and she fully expected to wind Justin Arnold around her dainty little finger—although as yet the winding had made no progress.

As the guests followed Mrs. Garson, the housekeeper, upstairs, Dorothy paused and detained Arnold a moment.

"It's lovely of you," she said, smiling and dimpling at him, "to make this party for me. And I'm so glad I'm here first. I like to be first part of a party."

"You're the party of the first part," said Arnold, smiling at his own rather heavy attempt at wit.

"Oh, don't say that! It sounds so legal."

"Well, you don't want it to be illegal, do you?"

But Dorothy had run away upstairs, and Justin Arnold went again to his threshold, to welcome other arriving guests.

At tea-time all assembled on the beautiful West Terrace. Partially enclosed with glass, yet with wide open casements, it was a most attractive setting for the gay group that gathered around the tea-tables.

It was early in October, but frost had already appeared and had turned the tangled green into glowing red and gold.

The wedding of Justin Arnold and Dorothy Duncan would take place later in the same month, and this week-end party at White Birches was partly by way of an announcement, and partly because Dorothy had requested it. The girl loved social gayety, and to be the central figure of this merry occasion, without yet being the actual hostess of White Birches, appealed to her.

Miss Abby Wadsworth, a cousin of Justin Arnold's, was nominally the head of the house. Although a capable housekeeper and a complete

corps of well-trained servants relieved her of all household cares, Miss Abby felt and enjoyed the responsibility of her position.

Of course she would soon have to abdicate in favor of Dorothy Duncan, but she was fond of the girl, and really glad that Justin was to be married at last. He was a man of forty years, and had grown so confirmed in his bachelorhood that Miss Abby had feared he would never succumb to any feminine charms. And then he had met Dorothy Duncan, lovely, bewitching, coquettish Dorothy, and he had immediately decided to marry her. He had no doubt as to her willingness, for was he not the wealthy Justin Arnold, master of White Birches, and scion of an aristocratic name and lineage? Nor had Miss Duncan hesitated. Slightly dazzled by the wonderful good fortune that had come to her, she had answered yes to his question, and now the wedding day was only a few weeks hence.

Dorothy was twenty-two and intensely romantic; but if it ever seemed to her that there was a discrepancy between her own age and that of her lover, or if she ever felt that Justin was a little lacking in his demonstrations of affection, she never shared her thoughts with any one, and even her own mother had no reason to believe otherwise than that Dorothy was supremely happy.

And yet, as she sat on the west terrace, drinking tea with the others, her battery of smiles and dimples and coquettish glances was directed, not at her fiancé, but at two or three other young men, who seemed well enough pleased at the situation.

Dorothy, in a frock of white woollen material, with a touch of scarlet velvet here and there, sat in a large wooden swing, comfortably surrounded with scarlet cushions. One dainty, slippered foot touched the floor now and then as she kept the swing swaying, and, in her gayest mood, bandied repartee with the other young people.

Leila Duane, the only other young girl present, was a complete foil for Dorothy. Leila's fair beauty, her golden hair and blue eyes and her pale blue crêpe gown, set off vividly Dorothy's glowing type, her dark hair, her flashing brown eyes and rosy cheeks.

Two young men, Emory Gale and Campbell Crosby, partners of a law firm, and inseparable chums, sat near the girls and alternately teased and complimented them.

Ernest Chapin, Arnold's secretary, was also in the group. Chapin was looked upon quite as one of the family. He took care of Justin Arnold's financial interests, planned and advised concerning additions or improvements to the place, looked after the correspondence, and, moreover, was often of help to Miss Wadsworth in her social duties and responsibilities. Chapin was a clean-cut, good-looking young fellow, though without the dash and fashionable nonchalance that characterized Gale and Crosby.

These two men lived in Boston, and conducted their law business there. Incidentally, they were Justin Arnold's lawyers, and though he had little legal business to be attended to, it was a convenient pretext for them occasionally to visit White Birches.

Emory Gale was of a waggyish type. He "jollied" everybody, he said impertinent things under the guise of innocent candor, and he was invariably good-natured and kind-hearted. But beneath his careless manner was a shrewd aptitude for business, and as the senior member of the firm he attended to the more important matters, letting Crosby do the routine work.

Campbell Crosby was a cousin of Justin Arnold. Indeed, the two men were the only ones left of the main branch of the family, and, though several years younger, Crosby had always been intimate with his cousin, and the two had always been warm friends. As children, they had been much together, and Crosby had spent many happy summers at White Birches, admiring and adoring Arnold, as a small boy often does admire an older one.

The other guests were Mr. and Mrs. Fred Crane, he a naturalist devoted to his cause, and his wife a pretty little woman with sharp eyes and a sharp tongue, but whose brightness and vivacity made her an attractive guest.

But though all present were interesting or charming in their several ways, all were dominated by the presence of that most important personage, Miss Abby Wadsworth.

There are some women who possess the power of making their presence felt, and that without any apparent effort. Miss Wadsworth was one of these. She had only to sit in her accustomed easy-chair, and her very presence demanded and received recognition and respect. She was perhaps sixty years old, a cousin of Justin Arnold's father, and her manner gave the impression that to be a Wadsworth was far more important than to be an Arnold, or indeed any other name in any social register.

She did not wear the traditional black silk of the elderly cousin, but wore modern and fashionable gowns of becoming color and of modish though not extreme cut.

Everybody liked Miss Abby, and though occasionally she pronounced blunt truths, yet she had a good sense of humor, and was easy enough to get along with if allowed to dictate in all matters, whether they concerned her or not.

"You two men are inseparable," said Dorothy to Mr. Gale and Mr. Crosby. "I think I have never seen one of you without the other."

"You will, though," said Campbell Crosby. "Just for that, I'm going to take you for a long walk around the grounds; and we may get lost in a wildwood tangle and never come back!"

"Like the babes in the woods," said Leila Duane. "If you don't return soon, Mr. Gale and I will go out and cover you with autumn leaves."

"But you may not find us," said Crosby. "We may fall into a deep, dank tarn. I've no idea what a deep, dank tarn is, but I know there is one on the place. I remember I used to play around it when I was a boy."

"Well, I'd like to see it," said Dorothy, jumping out of her swing. "Come on, Mr. Crosby, and show it to me."

"Dorothy," interposed Justin Arnold, "stay where you are. Do you suppose I will let you go walking with another man?"

"Do you suppose," retorted Dorothy, "that I will ask your permission, if I choose to go?"

The lovely, laughing face was so merry that it took away all petulant spirit from the question, and Dorothy's dark eyes flashed with fun as she slowly went toward Crosby.

"If you want to see any part of the grounds of White Birches, I will escort you myself," went on Arnold.

"Oh, come, now, Justin," said Crosby, "don't begrudge me a little stroll with your girl. I'll bring her back safely."

"Let her go, Justin," dictated Cousin Abby. "She'll enjoy a walk with Campbell, and goodness knows she'll see enough of you all the rest of her life! It's only a few weeks to the wedding day, and after that she can't go gadding about with young men. Run along, Dorothy, and flirt with Campbell all you've a mind to."

"Yes, do," said Crosby, but whether it was the too eager look in his eyes, or whether Dorothy suddenly decided to humor Justin, she refused to go.

"All right," said Crosby gayly; "but don't think I don't know why you refused. You just do it to pique me, and make me more crazy about you than ever!"

As all present were accustomed to Crosby's outspoken remarks, they paid little heed to this speech, but he murmured low in Dorothy's ear, "And that's really true, and you know it. And you'll take that walk with me to-morrow, see if you don't!"

"Hold there, Campbell!" cried Justin. "Stop whispering to my girl! I declare, old man, if you don't let her alone, you and I will have to revive the good old fashion of duelling!"

"Oh, I wish you would!" exclaimed Dorothy, clapping her hands. "Leila, would n't you just love to see a real live duel?"

"Yes, if they all stayed alive afterward. But I should n't want any fatal effects; they're so troublesome and unpleasant."

"Oh, don't talk about such horrid subjects," said Mrs. Crane. "Let's talk about the wedding."

## CHAPTER II.

## DOROTHY'S CONQUESTS

LATER in the afternoon, Arnold asked Campbell Crosby to go for a walk, adding that he wanted a bit of a business talk with his lawyer.

Rightly guessing that it was in regard to the making of a new will, Crosby sauntered off with his cousin.

"You see," Arnold said, "if I did n't marry, old chap, my fortune would fall to your share eventually."

"Fiddlesticks!" returned his cousin. "Any one would think you were a doddering old gentleman, and I your young and upstart heir. Please remember I'm only eight years younger than you are, so I hold we're contemporaries, and have little chance of inheriting from each other. And, any way, Just, I wish you'd cut out that kind of talk. You know perfectly well I don't want your riches nor this fortified old barracks of yours, either. But I do wish you had n't selected for your future bride the only girl I ever loved."

"The latest, you mean," said Arnold, slightly smiling. "I remember definitely about a score of those 'only girls you ever loved,' and I think there are a few I've forgotten."

"Oh, come now, I never really loved any one but Dorothy."

"I'm truly sorry, old chap, but it can't be helped now. And I'd feel sorrier still, but that I know you'll find another only girl to love, now that Dorothy is out of the running. And now, Cam, I want you and Gale to draw me up a new will. I'm going to leave a fairish little sum to you, whether you want it or not; and a bunch to Cousin Abby, and a good bit to Driggs and Peters."

"And the housekeeper?"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Carson. But these legacies are the same as they stand in my present will."

"Oh, cut it, Justin! You're only making this will because you think it devolves on the head of the house of Arnold to do that sort of thing. Don't bother about it for the present. You'll be married in a few weeks, and then Dorothy will be your legal heir, and you can fix up your will and that precious legacy to me afterwards."

"You're a good sort, Campbell. I have got a lot of things to attend to before the wedding, so perhaps it would be as well to leave that matter until afterward. Any way, I suppose I'd better take up the subject with Gale. It might be less embarrassing, as I'm not going to leave him anything."

"Do as you like, old chap; but I say, Just, I wish you'd let me off from being your best man. Truly, I'm hard hit by that little black-eyed witch, and, confound it! a fellow hates to stand tamely by and fairly assist another fellow to marry the girl he cares for!"

"Why, Cam, I did n't know you were so serious as all that. Of course I'll let you off, if you insist. Chapin could be my best man, I suppose—or Gale—or even Fred Crane. There are plenty of fellows, but I expected to have you."

"Well, I'd rather you'd get some one else, if you will. I say, Justin, do you remember the day we climbed that turret? Shinned up the outside! We were a venturesome pair of kids, were n't we?"

"Yes; I expect there were mighty few places about this old house that we did n't climb up or over or through."

"And you used to boost me up into all sorts of dark holes where you were too big to get in yourself, and I felt honored to be used for such a purpose! We never climbed over the wall, did we?"

"No, we never could manage that. That's a pretty good wall, Cam."

"Yes, as walls go. But I think it's a blot on the landscape. It's of no earthly use; why don't you tear it down?"

"Tear it down! I'd as soon think of razing the house to the ground!"

"Oh, well, if you like it, I've nothing more to say."

There was a small dinner dance that night, and Dorothy was beset on all sides by would-be partners. Her dances were divided, and the intervals between them were carefully portioned out to eager swains, some of whom met the little witch for the first time that evening.

"Is n't this my dance?" said Arnold, coming up to her as she sat in a window-seat with Emory Gale.

"I hope so," said Gale, "for perhaps you'll be able to keep this young person in order. She's flirting desperately all over the place; and has even tried her beguiling arts on me."

"Nothing of the sort," said Dorothy, pouting. "I should n't waste them on you—you're too unappreciative!" Then, turning to Arnold, with an exaggerated gesture of appeal, she said, "Let me fly with you, O lord of my life! Every one else bores me to extinction, and I live only in hope of being again with you!"

Though these fervid words were uttered in deep, vibrant tones, Dorothy's glances strayed wickedly toward Gale, and the humorous twinkle in her eyes proved that her speech was merely a joke born of her high spirits and love of foolery.

But Arnold grasped her arm and drew her almost roughly out of the dancing-room, through the great hall, and out on a small veranda, where they found themselves alone in the moonlight.

"Dorothy," he exclaimed, in angry accents, "what do you mean by guying me like that? Don't you know I won't stand for it?"

"I know you will," cooed Dorothy, as with her little finger-tips she daintily patted his bronzed cheek.

The touch of those soft fingers put an end to scolding, as Dorothy knew it would, but though Justin's arm went round her, and his voice became tender and lover-like, he could not resist a little more plain speaking.

"It's bad enough now, when we're only engaged, but if after we're married you go flirting about with every Tom, Dick, and Harry, there'll be trouble."

"There'll be trouble, any way, after I'm married;" and Dorothy drew down the corners of her dimpled mouth with the expression of one who foresees dire disaster.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, Justin, you're so severe and hard and dictatorial! I just know you won't let me do anything after we're married!"

"Then, why do you marry me?"

"Because I want to. But I do want you to be a little kinder to me, a little more lenient, a little more gentle——"

Naughty Dorothy squeezed out a tear or two, which, as she had fully intended, brought Arnold to his knees, figuratively. He did not actually kneel, but he gathered the little witch in his arms, and said, "Don't cry, dear. You shall have everything you want, and nothing you don't want, after we're married! There, how does that suit your little ladyship?"

"That's all right, then;" and Dorothy smiled through what was left of her two tears. "And now, Justin, you must take me back, for I've promised this dance to Mr. Chapin."

"Chapin? I say, Dorothy, it's awfully good of you to give him a dance, when you have so many more interesting men at your feet. Dance with him all you like, dear, but don't dance much with Cam Crosby, will you?"

"Jealous of your own cousin! Fie, fie! I won't promise. He has asked me for a whole heap of dances."

"I don't doubt that, but I give you fair warning: every time I see you with him, I'm coming to take you away. I only wish I could dance myself, and then no other man should have a single turn."

"You're an old foggy, Justin! You can't dance, and you can't play Bridge, and you can't do much of anything gay and jolly!" Then, as a dark frown settled on her lover's face, she whispered, close to his ear, "But I love you," and then turned quickly, to find Ernest Chapin waiting for her.

"Don't let's dance; let's sit it out," he said, leading her back to the very same little veranda where she had just been with Arnold. It was a dear little nook, with moonlight gleaming through the tracery of vines, which made weird black shadows on its light stone floor.

It was secluded from passers-by, and as Chapin paused and drew

Dorothy to him, in the dark of its shadows, he whispered passionately, "Dear, I can't stand it! I *can't* see you with him, and see his air of ownership of you!"

"But I'm going to marry him. Why should n't he show an air of ownership?" Dorothy spoke coldly, but she was trembling, and her large eyes lifted themselves to Chapin's face with a despairing glance.

He clasped her two little hands tightly in his own. "You are selling yourself to him!" he exclaimed, in tense, low tones. "You know you love me, and yet you are marrying Arnold because he is rich."

"It is not so! You have no right to talk to me like that! I adore him, I worship the ground he walks on!"

"You blessed baby!" said Chapin, putting his arm around her. "The very emphasis you put on those ridiculous words proves how false they are. Dorothy, dearest, tell me just once that you do love me, and I will let you go."

"You must let me go, any way, Ernest. Don't hold me, please don't! Justin may come back at any moment."

"I don't care. I wish he would! Dorothy, how *can* you marry that man, almost old enough to be your father? How can you sell yourself for wealth and high position?"

But Dorothy's senses had returned. "I'm not doing anything of the sort, Mr. Chapin, and I command you to stop talking to me like that. As you know, I never even saw you until after I was engaged to marry Mr. Arnold. If I had met you sooner——" There was a little break in Dorothy's voice, and Chapin whispered despairingly, "Oh, darling, if you only had!"

"And now," Dorothy went on, "there is nothing more to be said on this subject, now or ever. It is not honorable in you, Mr. Chapin, nor in me. In a few weeks I shall marry Mr. Arnold, and I hope I may trust you never to say anything of this nature to me again."

"I hope you may trust me, Dorothy," said the man brokenly, "but I know I cannot trust myself."

"At least, we can try," said Dorothy, in a low voice, and then without another word they returned to the dancing-room.

### CHAPTER III.

#### MONDAY EVENING

THOUGH the house-party had been asked only for the week-end, most of the guests were easily persuaded to stay a few days longer.

Emory Gale and Campbell Crosby were the only ones who were unable to accept their host's invitation to remain longer at White Birches. Business called them, they declared, and they were obliged to leave at noon for Boston.

Dorothy and Leila gave way to protestations of great grief at parting with them, and though the protestations were mere fooling, yet Crosby looked longingly into Dorothy's eyes, while, unconscious of this, Gale was pouring out his whole soul in a glance for Leila's benefit.

The girls had accompanied the departing guests in one of Justin's big motor-cars as far as the Fordham Heights Station. From here the men went to New York and took the one o'clock express to Boston.

Though usually inclined to light and desultory chatter, Gale and Crosby said little to each other during the first miles of their train ride. But after they had smoked for awhile in silence, they grew a little less taciturn and a little more inclined to be sociable.

"Hang it all!" said Gale, at last, "if I had time and opportunity, I believe I could induce that sweet young thing to be all my very own!"

"What's the matter with you?" growled Crosby. "She's going to marry Justin, and you'd better keep off!"

"Great snakes, man! I don't mean Dorothy! I mean the pretty one, the lovely Leila."

"Oh, Miss Duane. Yes, she's pretty enough in her way, but she can't hold a candle to that rosy little peach of a Dorothy."

"Dorothy is a beauty, all right, but she's too indiscriminating in her favors. She'd flirt with anybody, whether she's engaged to him or not."

"I wish she'd flirt with me," said Crosby gloomily. "But never mind me. Are you really hit by the Duane girl? She's a thoroughbred, I admit, and I wish you luck, old man."

"But I never get a chance to see her. She lives 'way off in Ohio, or somewhere, and she's just here for the wedding festivities."

"Well, be expeditious. We'll go down to White Birches again before the wedding, and she'll probably be there. I'll ask Cousin Abby to ask her, if you like. And then at the time of the wedding we'll all be at the Duncan house, I suppose, for a day or two, at least. I'm to be old Justin's best man. I told him I didn't want to, but I suppose I will. Oh, pshaw, man, if you've got any enterprise at all, you can find some way to woo and win a fair lady, without having her thrown at your head. I think she's ready to meet you half-way, anyhow."

Gale brightened up at this; but Crosby became more gloomy as he realized that Gale had a fair fighting chance, while he had none.

It was about six o'clock when they reached the station in Boston.

"What are you doing to-night?" asked Gale, as they parted.

"Dunno. Depends mostly on what letters and stuff I find waiting for me. We ought to get together and talk over that Herrmann case."

"Yes; where's that list of data I gave you to look over?"

"It's in my duffle, somewhere. I'll hunt it out when I get to the hotel."

"All right; and you'd better drop in at the Club to-night. I'm going to dine there, and then I'll tell you if I've had any word from Herrmann. There's lots of detail to be attended to in that case."

"I'll call you up and let you know what I can do, later. S' long, old man."

They parted, and Crosby went directly to the Hotel Lorraine, where he made his home. Gale had rooms in a bachelor apartment-house, but Crosby declared that a big hotel was the only place where a man could get decent service and comfortable belongings.

He nodded affably to the desk clerk, took his mail, and went directly to an elevator and up to his rooms on the third floor. He usually went up in the elevator, though, coming down, he oftener used the stairs. However, as his particular elevator-boy did not suffer financially from this state of things, no complaint was made.

Being expeditious by nature, and inherently opposed to what is known as "lost motion," he had run through his letters and was ready for his dinner at seven o'clock. As nothing in his mail offered him any more attractive occupation for the evening, he thought of going to the Club to see Gale, and he telephoned him to this effect before going on to the dining-room. Then, seated alone at his usual table, he opened the evening paper and was soon lost in its contents.

But a little before eight o'clock Gale was again called to the telephone and answered "Hello" to Crosby's greeting.

"I've changed my mind, old chap," said Crosby, "and I'm going to the Symphony Concert to-night. Ludwig Herter is on the programme, and I simply can't stay away. Want to go with me?"

"No; I believe not. I'll loaf around here for awhile, and turn in early. See that you get around to the office in some decent time to-morrow morning, and bring that memo."

"All right; I will. Good-by."

"Good-by;" and Gale hung up the receiver, rather relieved than otherwise at Crosby's defection, for he had made up his mind to write to Leila Duane that evening, in pursuance of Crosby's suggestion that he should hasten his wooing. And a letter like that required time and concentration of thought.

However, Gale returned to his rooms fairly early, and was getting ready to turn in for the night when, at eleven o'clock, his telephone rang.

It was Crosby again, and he began his conversation with voluble praise of the concert.

"Oh, let up," said Gale. "Tell me the rest in the morning. I'm off to by-by."

"But hold on, Gale, that is n't all I wanted to say. I find I've left that memo down at White Birches—had it there last night, looking

over it. I had it with some other papers in a kind of an old wallet, and left the whole business on the dresser in my bedroom."

"Oh, hang it, Crosby! You do beat the dickens with your forgetfulness! How'm I ever going to make a lawyer out of you, unless you get over your carelessness?"

"Don't scold, Emory. I did n't go for to do it. And, I say, I'll telephone to Driggs right away, and he'll send it right bang up here by registered mail and special delivery and all those things."

"You'd better wait till morning to telephone—they're probably having a party or something; and I suppose we can get along without that stuff to-morrow. But you do make me mad."

"Yes, I know I do," responded Crosby cheerfully. "Guess I'll say good-night before you get any madder."

"Good-night," replied Gale shortly. "Get around to the office on time to-morrow morning."

He hung up the receiver with a jerk, for, though he was fairly good-tempered, he did get tired of his partner's continual forgetfulness. But he allowed his thoughts to return to Leila Duane, and he soon forgot Crosby's deficiencies.

And when Crosby turned up Tuesday morning at nine forty-five, fully fifteen minutes ahead of time, full of apologies for his carelessness, Gale only said, "Never mind, old chap. Herrmann can wait a day or two more."

"I telephoned Driggs this morning," said Crosby, "long about eight o'clock. He said he'd whack it right up here. Good boy, Driggs!"

"Did he—did he say—anything about——"

"About Miss Duane pining away because of your absence? No, he did n't."

"Oh, stuff!" said Gale. "Chuck it, and get to work, now that you're here."

And then the two men really devoted their thoughts and efforts to the business in hand.

After Gale and Crosby had left White Birches, much of the life of the party seemed gone. Leila was plainly distrait. She had not failed to notice that Mr. Gale had evinced an interest in her attractive self, and she hated to have that interest cut off in its youth and beauty. As for Dorothy, she had only her fiancé and his secretary to flash her smiles at, and that was a beggarly portion of men for the unlimited number of smiles she had at her disposal. And so when Leila attempted to appropriate Ernest Chapin, Dorothy showed fight.

After all, it was the old situation. Dorothy cared for Ernest Chapin, but he was poor. Justin Arnold was an old foggy, dictatorial, and a good deal of a bore, but he was rich.

Perhaps Dorothy was neither more nor less mercenary than other girls, but she had made up her mind to marry Justin Arnold, and she had no intention of allowing her heart to interfere with her plans.

This, however, did not prevent her from smiling at Chapin, and Dorothy's smiles were like fuel to a flame. And so fascinating was this game, that Dorothy became more and more daring, more and more interested in Ernest Chapin, until finally her mother interfered.

"Dorothy," she said straightforwardly, "you *must* stop flirting with Mr. Arnold's secretary. Not only is it bad form and beneath your dignity, but you are jeopardizing your whole future. Mr. Arnold won't stand it much longer."

"How do you know, Mother?"

"I know from the way he looks at you when you're making those silly grimaces at Mr. Chapin."

"I don't think they're silly grimaces," and Dorothy cast a casually admiring glance at herself in a mirror; "and Mr. Chapin does n't, either."

"Indeed he does n't! He's over head and ears in love with you, if that's any satisfaction to your foolish, vain little heart! Dorothy, I wish you had more dignity."

"Now, Mother, *am* I a dignified type?"

What mother could help smiling fondly at this question, put by a dainty, saucy sprite, to whom the word "dignity" could not possibly be applied? But she tried to hide her admiration, and said with would-be sternness, "You must try to achieve a little, my dear, if you're going to be Justin Arnold's wife."

"*"I will be good, dear mother,"* I heard a sweet child say," sang Dorothy, with mischievous glances at her mother. "Honest and truly, black and bluely, I *will* be good—if I can!"

And then with a parting kiss and a gentle little shake of her mother's shoulders, Dorothy ran away to dress for dinner.

Later in the evening, and after the dinner guests had gone, Arnold took Dorothy out for a little stroll around the grounds. The moonlight made the white birch trees even more silvery of bark, and turned their foliage to black velvet. Deep down in the ravines could be seen silver lights on the black water, and the autumn wind murmuring in the trees gave an added touch of solemn grandeur.

"It is a beautiful place," said Dorothy, a little thrilled as she stood on the South Terrace and looked down into the dark tangles of the woodland; "but not—not very cheerful, is it, Justin?"

"It is a magnificent place, Dorothy, but I fear you're incapable of appreciating it. You would probably prefer Italian formal gardens and great sweeps of sunny lawn, with gay-colored flower-beds here and there."

"Well, yes," said Dorothy; "I think that would be pretty. But it would n't fit White Birches, would it, Justin?"

"I should say not! I'm glad you can at least realize that. Why, Dorothy, this is perhaps the finest old place in this country. That stone wall is unique, and as for that great arched gateway, I doubt if many English parks can match it. We Arnolds appreciate the grandeur and dignity of our ancestral home, and I hope and trust, Dorothy, that you, too, will learn to do so. Let us go in now; it is growing chill."

"Yes, let us go in. It is dignified and all that, but somehow, Justin, it frightens me. The shadows are so weird, and those ghostly white trees shiver in the wind like spectres of the departed Arnolds. Do you suppose they're wagging their branches at me because they don't like me?"

"Nonsense, Dorothy! You're enough to give a man the creeps. Come on into the house."

As the ladies took up their bedroom candles and went upstairs, leaving the men to spend a half-hour in the smoking-room, Dorothy called down from the upper landing, "Don't forget to put on the burglar-alarm, Justin. Somebody might come and carry me off."

It was characteristic of Arnold that he answered seriously, "I've never forgotten it yet, Dorothy," and ignored the latter part of her speech.

The burglar-alarm was rather a standard joke among guests at White Birches, but this had never interfered with Justin Arnold's systematic observance of the old custom.

Dorothy paused at Leila's room for a good-night gossip. She was still in a quiet mood, and Leila asked her frankly what was the matter.

"Nothing," said Dorothy, with a little sigh. "I'm going to try to give a successful imitation of the dignity of the Arnolds for the rest of my life. I must learn to behave like an Arnold if I'm going to be one."

"Perhaps," said Leila daringly, "you'd rather see than be one!"

"No, not that," said Dorothy thoughtfully. "Justin is n't very much to see, you know."

"I think he's a very handsome man."

"Oh, handsome nothing! He has a face like a hawk, a disposition like an iceberg, and not a bit of temper. I wish he had a temper!"

"He'll probably develop one after he marries you."

"It won't be my fault if he does n't. But he is an old duck, and I'm terribly fond of him. Now let's change the subject. How many letters have you had from Mr. Gale?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Leila, blushing. "He only went away this noon. He's hardly in Boston yet."

"Oh, yes, he is. He reached there about six o'clock, and I've no doubt he's spent the whole evening writing letters to you and tearing them up, in a vain endeavor to strike just the right note of friendliness."

"Dorothy, you're a goose, and I wish you'd go on to bed."

"I am going, dearie, because I know you want to write to Emory Gale!"

Dodging the little white pillow that Leila threw at her, Dorothy flew out into the hall and made for her own room.

As she turned a corner of the dimly lit corridor, she felt herself suddenly grasped by a pair of strong arms and drawn quickly between some heavy draped curtains, and out onto a tiny balcony.

"Sh!" whispered Ernest Chapin's voice, close to her ear. "I've kidnapped you! You said some one might, so I thought I'd be the one!"

"Unhand me, villain!" whispered Dorothy, giggling at the escapade. "I decline to be drawn behind the arras and carried to who knows what fearful fate!"

"No more fearful fate than to look at the moon for two minutes. It's marvellous from this balcony, shining on that little dark pool. Come and see."

Not entirely unwilling, Dorothy let herself be led out on the little balcony, and, to do Chapin justice, the moonlight effect was quite all he had claimed for it.

Dorothy knew perfectly well she ought not to be out there alone with Ernest Chapin, but a sort of reaction had followed her demure mood, and she murmured, "Just a minute, then. I won't give you but just exactly one minute."

"Then, I shall make the most of it," said Chapin, quickly clasping her in his arms. "Dorothy, my darling, I would n't do this, but I know, *I know*, you love me. You don't love Arnold! And, oh, sweetheart, don't marry him! *Don't* sell yourself for the Arnold fortune! Come to me, dearest, for you know, you *know*, you love me."

The sweetness and nearness of Dorothy, and the maddening effect of the moonlight, had caused Chapin to lose all caution, and, though low, his deep tones were clear and distinct.

A cold, hard voice followed his own:

"Oh, no, she does n't love you, Chapin. You're awfully mistaken! She may be flirting with you—it's one of her bad habits—but she does n't love you."

"I do," declared Dorothy, irritated by Arnold's calm statements and cutting manner.

"No, you don't, Dorothy. You're a little affected by the moonlight, but you're not in love with a man who is beneath you socially, and who, incidentally, is a coward, and a traitor to the man who employs him."

Ernest Chapin let his arms fall, and released Dorothy from his embrace. Though his voice quivered ever so slightly, he said slowly and clearly, "I will answer those remarks to you alone, Mr. Arnold."

"Yes; I think you will," Justin Arnold replied. "Go to your room, Dorothy. I will discuss this little matter with you to-morrow."

"Good-night, Justin," said the girl, in a small, scared voice. "Good-night, Mr. Chapin."

Neither of the men replied, and Dorothy, dazed at the situation, walked slowly to her own room and went to bed.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### MISSING!

BUT Dorothy Duncan was blessed with a volatile and unserious disposition. So, notwithstanding the somewhat dramatic episode in which she had taken part, she slept soundly all night, and only awakened when a maid brought her breakfast to her at nine o'clock.

As was often the case with Dorothy, she was repentant over her wrong-doing, or, at least, she thought she was, though as a matter of fact she was only sorry that she had been discovered. She had fully meant to tell Ernest Chapin, once for all, that he must not make love to her, that she did not love him, and that as Arnold's promised wife she could not listen to such words from another man. Incidentally, she *did* love him, but to Dorothy all was fair in love and war, and her loves were at war most of the time.

Presently Leila Duane came into Dorothy's room, wearing her usual faultless morning garb of starched white linen. Leila believed in going down to breakfast in an attractive frock, as it gave her a slight advantage over girls who remained in their rooms.

Dorothy did n't believe in this, as she required no advantage.

"What's the matter, Leila?" asked Dorothy, stretching her dimpled arms, and adjusting her pink breakfast cap, which was askew on her rioting curls.

Leila looked at her silently for a minute. "Dorothy," she said, "something strange has happened—at least, we don't know whether it's strange or not."

"Well, do you know whether it's happened or not?" said Dorothy, unable to realize that Leila was serious.

Whereupon Leila sat down on the edge of the bed and began to cry. "Dorothy, don't be frivolous," she sobbed. "It may be something awful. They can't find Mr. Arnold."

"Can't find Justin! What do you mean? Where is he?"

"Why, we don't know! Nobody knows. Only, he's gone."

"What nonsense, to get so excited over that! Justin's old enough

to take care of himself. He's probably gone to New York to buy my wedding ring."

Leila got up to go away. "Dorothy," she said, "I advise you to stop talking like that, and I advise you to get dressed and come downstairs as soon as you can."

"Oh, fiddle-de-dee!" cried Dorothy, as the door closed after Leila. Then a remembrance of last night's scene came to her mind, and she wondered if that had anything to do with Justin's disappearance. If it had been Mr. Chapin who had disappeared, she reasoned, Justin might have discharged him; but nobody could discharge Justin! "Except me," she thought, "and I've no intention of doing it. Well, I guess I'll go down and see to things."

She rang for the maid, and proceeded to make a leisurely toilet. Though not given to questioning servants, she asked the girl what she knew about Mr. Arnold's absence.

"I don't know nothing, miss. I heard Peters say that Mr. Arnold was n't in the house or on the place, but Driggs he told us all not to say a word to anybody, and, anyhow, I don't know nothing about it, miss."

Vague visions of Justin Arnold committing suicide because he had found her in Ernest Chapin's arms passed through Dorothy's brain, but were instantly dismissed as absurd. Justin Arnold was not that kind of man. He'd kill his secretary before he'd kill himself; and, any way, Dorothy felt positive there was no tragedy, but that a comedy explanation would soon be discovered.

Dressed in a fresh white frock, not stiff like Leila's, but soft and frilly, Dorothy went downstairs. She found everybody assembled in the library, with Miss Abby Wadsworth, as usual, conducting affairs.

Mrs. Duncan, with a very grave expression on her face, sat on a sofa, and made room for Dorothy by her side. As the girl felt her mother's arm go round her, she realized in that touch that something serious had happened, and she sat quietly, listening with the others.

"I can't understand it," Miss Abby was saying. "Peters, at what time did you go to Mr. Arnold's room this morning?"

"Shortly after nine o'clock, ma'am."

"Why did you go?"

"Well, ma'am, you see, Mr. Arnold always rings for me promptly at eighty-thirty. And this morning he did n't ring, and I waited and waited until after nine, and then I made bold to go and tap at his door. I knocked three times, and he did n't answer, so I ventured to try the door. It was n't locked, and I went in. Mr. Arnold was n't there, and his bed had n't been slept in. The covers were folded just as I always turn them down for him every night. His clothes were not about, and there was no sign of anybody."

"But this is very strange," pursued Miss Abby, quite as if it were Peters's fault. "Why should Mr. Arnold sit up all night?"

"I don't know, ma'am. But if he did do that same, where is he now?"

"He must be somewhere about the place," said Miss Abby decidedly. "Of course there is an explanation. He may have gone for a walk late last night, and have fallen or met with some accident."

"Excuse me, ma'am," said Driggs, "but he could n't get out of the house."

"Why could n't he?" inquired Mrs. Duncan.

"Because," explained Driggs, "Mr. Arnold always turns on the burglar-alarm himself every night; and I turn it off every morning. When I look at it in the morning, ma'am, the indicator would show if it had been tampered with during the night."

"Are you sure?" asked Mr. Crane, with interest.

"Yes, sir; and if a window or door had been opened during the night while that there alarm was set, there'd have been a ringin' of electric bells all over this house, a-makin' such a din as nobody could have slept through. No, sir, that alarm was n't touched from the time Mr. Arnold put it on last night, till I put it off this morning. And between them times, they was n't no door nor window opened or shut in this whole house. Therefore, I says Mr. Arnold must be in the house, because he could n't get out."

In his intense earnestness, Driggs had almost forgotten his servility of manner, and, looking straight at Mr. Crane, spoke as man to man, in the face of a great mystery. Then he turned his gaze to Miss Wadsworth, and, though she also was mystified, she nodded her head in corroboration of Driggs's statements and his conclusion therefrom.

"It is so," she said. "Justin has often explained to me how perfectly the alarm works, and how impossible it is to open an outside door or a window without starting the bells to ringing."

"Might it not be temporarily out of order?" suggested Mr. Crane, who had constituted himself Miss Abby's right-hand man and chief adviser.

"It never has been, sir," volunteered Driggs, "since I've been here, and that's nigh on to forty years. I come here a young man, when Mr. Justin was a baby; and his father was a crank, if I may say it, about burglars. He had all the wiring done and the alarm put in in his day; and, following his orders, Mr. Justin has kept the thing up, and has added a good many new contraptions as fast as they were invented. No, sir, wherever my master may be, and whatever his reason for hiding, he's in this house! 'Cause why? 'Cause he could n't get out, without either turning off that alarm or raising a clatter; and neither of those things was done."

"Then he must be in the house," said Mr. Crane. "This is a large and rambling structure. May he not have gone into some one of the smaller rooms, and perhaps suffered from some kind of a seizure or stroke?"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Miss Abby. "Do you mean that Justin may be alone and unconscious, perhaps suffering, under this very roof?"

"I only mean that it might be so."

"Then let us have a thorough search made," said Miss Abby excitedly. "Peters, you know which rooms Mr. Arnold would be likely to go into—go and search them all, at once. Take some of the other servants to help you. Go all over the house, into every nook and cranny."

Peters departed, though the expression on his face showed that he hardly thought this solution of the mystery probable.

"It is n't like Mr. Arnold," began Ernest Chapin, speaking slowly, "to go into any unused room so late at night. As you know, Miss Wadsworth, Mr. Arnold is most systematic in his habits. After turning on the alarm, he invariably goes directly to his room and to bed."

"That is so," agreed Miss Abby; "but as we have to face an unusual state of things, we must admit that Justin departed from his regular systematic procedure, and we must assume an unusual occurrence of some sort."

"But it all seems so ridiculous," spoke up Dorothy, who could not think anything serious had happened. "I'm sure Justin has only gone out for a walk or a ride, and will bob in at any minute. He might have started out *after* Driggs took off the alarm."

"But his bed has not been slept in," Miss Abby reminded her. "Peters says he thinks Justin did not go to his room at all, as his brushes and things have not been touched since Peters arranged them for the night."

"Who saw him last?" inquired Mr. Crane suddenly.

Every one started and all looked at one another, for the question sounded almost like an accusation.

"Why, I don't know," returned Miss Wadsworth. "It must have been some of the servants, I suppose. Let me see, we ladies all went upstairs about midnight, and I suppose you men went to the smoking-room—did n't you, Mr. Crane?"

"Yes; and we stayed there, I should think, some fifteen or twenty minutes. There were only Arnold, Mr. Chapin, and myself. The night before, Gale and Crosby were here, and we had a merrier time. But last night we weren't very gay, and I went upstairs, I should say, about twelve-thirty."

"That's right," said Mr. Chapin; "we went upstairs at half-past

twelve. When I left Mr. Arnold, he said he would make his tour of inspection of the house, as he always did, set the alarm, and then turn in. He must have done this, for he came upstairs not more than ten minutes after I did."

As Ernest Chapin said all this, in a slow, clear, and careful voice, he looked straight at Dorothy. The girl understood perfectly that he intended to say nothing of the scene on the little balcony, or of Mr. Arnold's appearance. She realized that he was doing this to screen her from possible unkind criticisms, for while Justin Arnold's whereabouts remained a mystery, it would be unpleasant to have a lovers' quarrel affect the question.

Dorothy was relieved and grateful to Mr. Chapin for this consideration, and as of course it was assumed that all the ladies had gone straight to their rooms and stayed there, no further questions were asked about it.

But now that it was acknowledged that the disappearance was a mystery, every one began to feel a vague uneasiness that was appalling because of its very vagueness. The facts were so few and so contradictory: Justin Arnold was missing; he could not get out of the house, and yet he was not in the house. That was the case in a nutshell.

Peters returned from his search of the rooms, and announced that there was no sign of the missing man, and no sign of anything unusual or strange in any room.

"When did you see Mr. Arnold last, Peters?" inquired Mr. Crane of the valet.

"When I laid out his dinner clothes, sir; or, rather, when I attended him as he dressed for dinner."

"He seemed the same as usual?"

"Just the same, sir. I've been with Mr. Arnold for nearly ten years, and he's always been the same. A kind master, but not given to talking to his servants. As, indeed, why should he? But some masters chat a bit now and then. After Mr. Arnold went down to dinner, I put his things in order, turned down his bed, and laid out his night things, and that always ends my duties for the day. Mr. Arnold never requires me when he goes to bed. He says it only bothers him to have me about then. So my evenings are my own."

"And when do you go to Mr. Arnold's room of a morning?" Mr. Crane had taken upon himself the right to institute this investigation, and asked his questions with the air of one in charge of a case.

"I never go, sir, until Mr. Arnold rings," Peters answered; "but he always rings for me at half-past eight. This morning he didn't; and as it was the first time such a thing had ever happened, I was surprised. I waited and waited, and then, something after nine o'clock, I went to his room, and found he had n't been there all night."

"He may have been there," objected Mr. Crane.

"Well, sir, if he was, he left no trace. Not a brush was touched, or anything on his dresser, or in his bedroom or bath-room. Of course he may have been in the room and gone away again, but he did n't sleep there last night. And"—Peters paused impressively—"he is n't in this house now, sir. I'll swear to that. I took two of the footmen, sir, and we've scoured the whole house, and there's no sign of Mr. Arnold anywhere."

"Of course there is n't!" exclaimed Dorothy. "He would n't go and hide in some cupboard, and, if he had a stroke of apoplexy or anything, he could n't have disappeared after it. I tell you he went out for some perfectly sensible reason, and he'll come back when he gets ready. I don't care anything about your burglar-alarm! If it's so clever and ingenious, he probably had some equally clever way to turn it off and on as he chose."

"But, Miss Duncan," said Driggs respectfully, "besides the burglar alarm, every door and window is fastened on the inside. The doors have heavy bolts and chains, and the windows have patent fastenings. These were all intact this morning, when I came downstairs."

"All but one, Driggs," said Dorothy, smiling at him. "The one Mr. Arnold went out at *could n't* have been fastened this morning, although you *think* it was."

Driggs said nothing, but looked unconvinced, and Mr. Crane suggested, "He has so many clever mechanical contrivances, perhaps he *could* open a door or window and then fasten it behind him."

"But there'd be no sense to it," said Ernest Chapin impatiently. "Why should a man like Mr. Arnold leave his house secretly in the dead of night? As his secretary, I am conversant with his business affairs, and there is nothing among those that could call him away on a secret errand. And if he had a secret errand, he was at liberty to go and attend to it, unquestioned, in broad daylight."

"What, then, do you think is the solution of this mystery?" asked Mr. Crane.

"I don't know," replied Chapin. "It seems to me that he must be in the house, although, of course, Peters has made a thorough search."

"He *can't* be in the house," declared Miss Abby. "I don't care anything about thorough searching; if Justin were in the house, he'd be in some one of the rooms where he reasonably belongs. He went *out* of the house, that's what he did!"

Every time this opinion was expressed, Driggs seemed to consider it an imputation against his own fidelity and veracity. His long period of service had given him certain privileges above those of an ordinary butler, and he allowed himself to volunteer a remark.

"Miss Wadsworth," he began, "may I say that if Mr. Arnold did get out of this house, which he could n't do unbeknownst, the watchman must have seen him do so? Would you, ma'am, call Malony and ask him?"

Glad of the new suggestion, Miss Wadsworth ordered that Malony be summoned at once.

The big Irishman appeared, and, at a nod from Miss Abby, Mr. Crane questioned him.

"You are the night watchman on the estate?"

"Yis, sor; I'm Malony, the night watchman. I've pathrolled these grounds ivery night for manny years."

"Do you walk all round the place, systematically?"

"I do thot! It's me dooty to poonch the time-clocks ivery half-hour."

"And where are the time-clocks?"

"Well, sor, there's wan at the gatekeeper's lodge, wan at the shtables, wan each at the four sides of the house and the four corners of the grounds; betune 'em all, I'm all over the grounds all the time, and nobody, least of all the masther, would be sthrollin' around without me knowin' of it."

"But if he had left the house, Malony, when you were in a distant corner of the grounds, you might not have seen him."

"Thrue for ye, sor; but thin, be the same token, I'd run across him sooner or later, in me thrips, fer he could n't get out of the grounds. The big gate is locked and barred so strong that it wud take a batterin'-ram to break it down. And this marnin' ivery one of thim bolts and bars was jist as they should be. So I puts it to ye, sor: cud anny man get out of that gate and bolt and bar it behind him? He cud not! And cud he get over the wall? ye'll say. He cud not! The wall is tin feet high, and the top av it is dekkyrated wid the foinest collection of broken bottles to be found in the country. Their p'int sticks up as jagged and sharp as so many sword-blades, and if anny man cud manage to climb over that wall, he'd be in ribbins when he kem down on the other side! Would Mr. Arnold do thot? He wud not! And so it's plain, sor, that Mr. Arnold did not come out av his house, which he could n't get out av; and did not purrood about his grounds, because, forbye, he is n't there!"

Malony's voice, at the last, dropped to a mysterious and meaningful whisper, so that Crane was moved to inquire, "What do you mean by saying so emphatically that Mr. Arnold is nowhere on the grounds?"

"Becuz I searched iverywhere! Me and two of the gardeners and some of the stable-b'ys, we've been scouring the grounds iver since we heard Mr. Arnold was missin', and, though we've looked in ivery ravine and holler, he jist ain't there!"

Mr. Crane rather prided himself on his "detective instinct," and he caught at what he considered a point.

"If Mr. Arnold could n't get out of the house, Malony, why did you go to the trouble of making such a thorough search of the grounds?"

Malony's honest face looked grave. "Perhaps it *was* raysonless, sor," he said, "but them grounds is my special charge at night. And though Mr. Arnold cuddent get out of the house without Driggs knowin' it, yet I thought it was up to me to make sure that he *was n't* in the grounds, in case I shud be asked the question."

To more than one mind present, this was a slight indication of a possible complicity on the part of Driggs. The only evidence that the burglar-alarm had not been switched off and on again while Arnold went out, was Driggs's word to that effect. But closely allied to that came the thought that if Driggs were not telling the truth, Malony might be equally mendacious!

However, there was no real reason to suspect these old servants. For years they had been trusty and true, and any hypothesis leading toward an idea that they connived at or assisted Justin Arnold's secret departure from his own home was too melodramatic and absurd to be considered for a moment.

## CHAPTER V.

### A BAFFLING SEARCH

THE servants were dismissed, and the little group in the library looked at one another blankly, while considering what to do next.

As head of the house, in Arnold's absence, Miss Wadsworth was looked to for directions or suggestions. But the poor lady, though calm and composed as ever, had no suggestions to offer.

Ernest Chapin, as confidential secretary of the missing man, seemed next in authority, but, unlike Miss Abby, he was agitated and unnerved at the situation. Most of the time he sat with head bowed, as if deeply depressed, and when spoken to he looked up with a start, and his face expressed a horror of uncertainty that seemed to add a deeper tone to the tragedy—if tragedy there were.

Dorothy Duncan persisted in treating the matter lightly. "I know Justin better than any of you," she said; "and I know just what he would do and what he would not do. And I know that he would not do any of the absurd things that you people seem to think he has done. He would not sneak out of his house at night, either with or without the assistance of his servants, knowing that it would throw all of us into this state of wonder and dismay. He would be too considerate of Miss Wadsworth and of—of myself, to do such a thing!"

"Then, where is he?" spoke up Fred Crane crisply.

"I don't know where he is; but I know he is on some perfectly plausible and commonplace errand. He has probably been delayed, but he will return shortly, and as soon as he possibly can."

Fred Crane was a little disconcerted at this rational way of looking at the matter, for already he had pictured himself doing clever detective work in what gave promise of being a mystery, if not a tragedy.

Somewhat reassured by Dorothy's practical remarks, Miss Wadsworth began to reason. "I really agree with you, Dorothy," she said, "or, rather, I should do so if I did not know far better than you do, my child, about the positive efficiency of the burglar-alarm. Why, once I went downstairs, one hot summer night, and unfastened and opened a library window. Scores of electric bells whirled all over the house, and the servants seemed fairly to spring up out of the floor, they collected so rapidly! I think with you that Justin did get out somehow, but not unless that alarm had been turned off."

Fred Crane put on his thinking-cap at this. Could it be that Miss Wadsworth suspected Driggs's veracity. But he hardly dared even hint at this, so he rather cleverly made another suggestion.

"As so much seems to hinge on the evidence of that burglar-alarm," he said, "why not send for an electrical expert of the right sort, and let him examine it?"

"That is a fine idea!" exclaimed Miss Abby, who really had been forced to let a suspicion of Driggs creep into her mind, though she fought against it.

"And if I may make a suggestion," said Mrs. Duncan, in her quiet way, "I propose that we send for Mr. Arnold's physician. I can't help thinking that Justin may have had a stroke of some sort, and be unconscious and helpless even now. His doctor could tell us if he were subject to anything of the sort."

"I know he is n't subject to anything of the sort," said Miss Abby thoughtfully, "but I think yours is a good idea, Mrs. Duncan. We will send for Doctor Gaspard, and at least he can tell us if he ever feared anything like that for Justin. Let us also send for an electrical expert, or whoever it is that examines complicated machinery. Who would such a man be? Do you know, Mr. Chapin?"

Ernest Chapin looked up with a start. "Why, yes—yes," he said, as if striving confusedly to bring his mind to bear on the question. "I—I think, Miss Wadsworth, we might send direct to the firm who put the alarm in, and ask them to send us a capable man for the purpose."

"Yes, do so," cried Fred Crane. "Let us telephone for him. We must make search for Arnold, and we cannot do so intelligently until we understand more about the working of that alarm. I'm sorry, but

I cannot believe, with Miss Duncan, that Arnold has gone off casually, and will soon return. I think the mystery is deeper than that, and I think, too, it is exceedingly wise to call in the family physician. There are other things than strokes or seizures that work harm to a man."

Then Mabel Crane spoke out, voicing the thought that had been secretly in the mind of every one. "Oh, Fred," she cried, almost hysterically, "you don't mean suicide!"

"Hush, hush, Mabel," admonished her husband. "We've no reason to think of such a thing. Justin was happy, and on the eve of his marriage to the girl he loved. Why should he dream of self-destruction just now, of all times?" It had been in Mr. Crane's mind, but when his wife put it into words, the idea seemed so impossible that he repudiated it at once.

But, by a sudden mutual impulse, Dorothy and Ernest Chapin looked at each other for the briefest moment, and then looked away again.

It was too preposterous! Dorothy could n't think that just because her lover had been incensed at seeing his fiancée in the arms of another man, he would do anything desperate. It was unthinkable! Justin was n't that kind of man. He had told Dorothy that he would discuss the subject with her in the morning, and she had expected no end of a scolding; but she had made up her mind to play the lovely penitent, and get herself forgiven by means of her own bewitching wiles. She intended to promise to stop flirting with other men, and she honestly intended to keep her promise. But, try as she would, she could not entirely banish from her mind the lurking thought that there might be some connection between the scene on the balcony last night and Justin's disappearance.

At this juncture, Driggs returned to the library, and, going to Miss Wadsworth, showed her a somewhat worn brown leather pocketbook.

"It's Mr. Crosby's, ma'am," said Driggs. "He left it in his bedroom, ma'am, when he went away yesterday. And he telephoned me this morning, ma'am, from Boston, as how it contained valuable papers, and would I ask Mr. Arnold to send it to him at once, by registered mail. That would be about eight o'clock, ma'am, that he telephoned, and I told him I would tell Mr. Arnold. And then, ma'am, in the excitement, I forgot all about the matter until just now. Will you send it to him, ma'am, or will Mr. Chapin?"

"Certainly," replied Miss Abby, taking the pocketbook and handing it to Ernest Chapin. "Please attend to it, Mr. Chapin, and get it off as soon as possible. The delay may trouble Mr. Crosby."

Leila Duane had said little during the conference of the others, but had sat listening, her big eyes wide with wonder at the mysterious situation. But now she spoke. "As Mr. Crosby and Mr. Gale are Mr.

Arnold's lawyers, perhaps they may know something about him. Perhaps he went to Boston to see them."

"He did n't go to Boston," said Fred Crane, a little weary of the reiteration, "because he could n't get out to go anywhere; but I think Gale and Crosby ought to be notified about what has happened."

"There has n't anything happened," insisted Dorothy. "At least, nothing that ought not to happen. But I do believe that Justin did go to Boston to see his lawyer. Don't tell me he could n't get out! He *must* have gotten out! And there's just where he's gone! He probably left a note somewhere saying so, but nobody thought of looking for that."

"Well, doing anything is better than doing nothing," declared Miss Abby. "Mr. Crane and Mr. Chapin, I wish you would do all the telephoning, please. Get the electrical man and the doctor, and then get a long distance to Boston, and see if Mr. Gale knows anything about Justin."

"Better get Gale first," said Mr. Crane. "If Arnold is up there, there's no use of getting in experts of any sort."

"That's so," agreed Ernest Chapin, and the two men went away to telephone.

"When will Mr. Gale and Mr. Crosby arrive?" asked Leila, when they returned, for she was already considering in what gown she would better array herself.

"Gale said they'd leave Boston on the one o'clock express. They can't get here much before seven—just in good time for dinner," said Mr. Crane, who had now definitely assumed the dictatorship. He was partly pushed into this position by Ernest Chapin's inability to pull himself together enough to be of any use. Indeed, the young secretary almost acted as if tragedy had already befallen, instead of merely an unspoken dread of it. He looked about with a vacant stare; when spoken to, he started suddenly, and then replied at random. His eyes looked frightened and vacant at the same time. He begged Mr. Crane to do the required telephoning, for he said he really did n't feel up to it.

"Don't take it so hard, Chapin," Fred Crane had responded. "I don't think anything untoward has happened to old Justin; but if that should be the case, it can't affect you as deeply as it would Dorothy and Miss Wadsworth. So brace up, and do what you can to help."

But though the men from Boston could not reach White Birches until seven o'clock, the doctor and the electrical engineer arrived during the afternoon hours.

Their information proved of no help in solving the mystery, but rather deepened it.

After a thorough and careful examination of the burglar-alarm and

all its attachments, annunciators and indicators, the electrical expert pronounced it the most marvellous affair of its kind he had ever seen. He said that it was in perfect order, and that, owing to its wonderful and ingenious mechanism, it was positively impossible that any one should have gone out of the house between 12:30 A.M., when it was turned on, and 7:30 A.M., when Driggs had turned it off. The man staked his entire reputation as an electrical expert on the positiveness of this statement; after which there was of course nothing to do but to theorize that Justin Arnold was still under his own roof, although this seemed equally impossible.

As to Doctor Gaspard, he simply pooh-poohed any suggestion that there was any flaw in Arnold's physical constitution or mental equipment. While, he said, a stroke of apoplexy or paralysis might happen to any one, yet some were far more liable to it than others, and Justin Arnold was the farthest possible removed from the type of constitution that would indicate that sort of thing. He too was willing to stake his professional reputation that whatever had happened to Arnold, if anything, was not a physical seizure of any kind. Nor was it any variety of mental derangement. Justin Arnold's brain was not of a sort to give way in an emergency, or under mental pressure of any kind; and, moreover, no emergency or mental pressure had transpired, that would even hint at such a condition.

"He is one of the soundest-minded men I know," concluded Doctor Gaspard, "and while I agree with you all that it is most mysterious, yet I must suspect the fallibility of a perfect machine before I can admit a hypothesis implying sudden dementia on the part of Justin Arnold."

## CHAPTER VI.

### DOROTHY'S FLIRTATIONS

THE family dispersed, only to congregate again in small groups here and there, to discuss the mystery.

Ernest Chapin asked Dorothy to go out on the South Terrace with him for a little chat, and, after a moment's hesitation, the girl complied. They found themselves alone on the terrace, and Dorothy said frankly, "You don't think, do you, Mr. Chapin, that Justin's absence has anything to do with last night's scene?"

"What scene do you mean?" said Chapin, looking exceedingly perturbed.

"Why, the scene he made when he found you and me out on the little balcony, looking at the moon."

"I was n't looking at the moon," said Chapin, and he turned away his eyes as he added in a low voice, "I was looking at you."

"Never mind what you were looking at," said Dorothy, blushing a little. "He spied us while you were looking; and I'm asking you if you think that circumstance had anything to do with his disappearance."

"How could it?" demanded Chapin savagely. "Do you suppose he went off and hanged himself because he saw me kiss you?" And then he added bitterly, "I only wish he had!"

"Oh, Mr. Chapin, how can you talk like that?" And Dorothy turned her lovely, frightened face toward him.

"Forgive me, Dorothy; I ought n't to have spoken like that. I don't know what I'm saying. This thing has unnerved me."

"Then, you too think something awful has happened to Justin?"

"I don't see how anything *could* happen to him, but I can't believe in a casual explanation of his absence. Can you?"

"No—not now. I did at first, but if he were only away on some errand, he would have sent word to me, somehow. He would n't have left me in suspense all this time."

"Unless he is angry with you," suggested Chapin.

"Well, if he is, Mr. Chapin, it's all your fault!" and Dorothy's eyes blazed with indignation.

"Then I'm glad of it," said Chapin exultantly. "If he's angry at you because he saw us together last night, and has gone away for that reason, I'm glad of it; and the longer he stays away, the better I'll like it!"

This speech did not seem to rouse Dorothy's ire as it should have done. Looking at Chapin gravely, she said, "What did Justin say to you last night after I left you?"

For a long time Chapin did not reply, and then when the silence had become almost unbearable he answered, "Nothing of any importance. And, Dorothy, be advised by me in this matter: never mention to any living soul that you and I were on the balcony last night, or that Arnold discovered us there. Will you promise me this?"

"Yes, I promise," said Dorothy, awed by the excessive earnestness of his manner and words. "Indeed, I have no wish to tell any one of that scene. I had expected to tell Justin this morning that such a thing should never happen again."

"But it shall happen again!" said Chapin, and, though he spoke in low tones, his voice had an exultant ring in it that startled Dorothy.

"What do you mean by that?" she breathed.

"I mean what I say! I told you last night you should never marry Arnold, and you shan't! You are mine, *mine*, and, whether Arnold returns or not, you shall never marry him, but you shall marry me! Because, Dorothy, because—you love me!"

Disregarding the real tenor of his speech, Dorothy caught at a phrase.

"Whether Justin returns or not," she repeated. "Why do you say that? Then, you *do* think something has happened to him!"

"I can't say," said Chapin, speaking more gently. "It's a mystery, dear, a deep mystery. But I doubt if we solve it very soon."

And then Mrs. Duncan appeared, and carried Dorothy off to her room to rest.

"What do you think, Mother?" asked the girl, when they were alone.

"I don't know, darling. There seems no explanation whatever; but of course there must be one soon. Meantime, my child, I want you to be more careful in your behavior. You must not flirt with that Mr. Chapin. I know you don't mean anything—flirtation is second nature to you—but, my dear child, it won't do! In Justin's absence I shall look after you as carefully as he would if he were here, and I cannot allow you to play at love-making with Mr. Chapin."

"It is n't playing, Mother," said Dorothy, in a low voice.

"What do you mean by that, Dorothy?"

"I mean that it is n't playing, because it's real. I *do* love him, Mother, and I *don't* love Justin."

"But you're going to marry Justin!"

"Yes, I am. When I engaged myself to him, I thought I loved him; or, at least, I liked him as well as anybody. But I had n't met Mr. Chapin then; and now——"

"Now you think you love him better than Justin! Dorothy, I'm not going to scold you, because you don't know your own mind, and you really imagine this state of things. But I'm going to forbid you ever to be alone with Mr. Chapin, and I'm going to command you to stamp out whatever affection you may think you feel for him. As Justin's promised wife, your faith and loyalty are due to him, and I know you must see for yourself that it is unfaithful and disloyal to treat Mr. Chapin as anything more than a mere acquaintance and your future husband's secretary."

Dorothy nestled in her mother's embrace, feeling, as she always did, the loving security of it.

"But suppose, Mother, that Justin never comes back."

"Dorothy! What an idea! Of course he'll come back! Why should n't he?"

"Oh, I s'pose he will. Well, when he does, I'll promise you that I'll never flirt with Ernest Chapin again; but until he does, I must have somebody to talk to."

"You're a little rogue," said her mother, kissing her fondly, "and as I'm here to look after you, I'm not much afraid that you'll do anything very dreadful. But I forbid you ever to be alone with Mr. Chapin for a moment, and I shall see to it myself that my commands

are obeyed. Now you must get dressed for dinner, dearie. What shall you wear?"

"I don't know," returned Dorothy thoughtfully. "I don't feel like wearing bright colors, for it seems, somehow, as if Justin were dead."

"Don't talk like that," said Mrs. Duncan peremptorily. "Put on your scarlet chiffon. If we feel down-hearted, that's all the more reason we should look as cheerful as possible. And probably Justin will come home to dinner, any way, and he likes you in that red dress."

"He likes me in anything; but he does n't *love* me in anything. At least, not what *I* call love."

As these words were half-muttered, Mrs. Duncan did not entirely catch them, and she went away to her own room, leaving Dorothy to decide on her costume herself.

And so it happened that Dorothy concluded to wear one of her simple white frocks, without even a touch of colored ribbon. But she put two scarlet carnations in her dark hair, and a few more as a shoulder-knot among the laces of her bodice. She went downstairs a little before dinner-time, half hoping she'd find Ernest Chapin on the terrace; for she had n't the least intention of obeying her mother's commands.

Chapin was not there, but Campbell Crosby was. He stood leaning against the terrace rail, with folded arms, looking out across the ravine. Dorothy went softly up to him, and stood by his side. As he turned and saw her, his face lighted up with a glad smile of greeting, and, taking both her hands in his, he said in a low tone, "Oh, I'm *so* glad to be back—with *you*."

It was no new thing to Dorothy Duncan to learn that a man was glad to come back to her, and she had long known that Campbell Crosby was desperately in love with her. But the little coquette had truly given her whole heart to Ernest Chapin, and since she had realized this she had no room in that really true and loyal little heart for even the shadow of any other man. But she could not change her innate spirit of coquetry, and so she flashed a meaning glance from her dark eyes to Crosby's, as she murmured, "Am I the real reason you're glad to be back?"

"Yes," said Crosby, coming a step nearer, and forcibly repressing a mad desire to take her in his arms; "and you know it, Dorothy!"

While not denying it, Dorothy assumed an expression of great gravity, and said pleadingly, "Don't look at me like that. Remember the real reason you are here—to help us find Justin. Oh, Mr. Crosby, where do you think he can be?"

"I don't care where he is," said Crosby, flinging discretion to the winds, "so long as he is n't here to forbid my looking at you."

Now, when Ernest Chapin said this sort of thing, Dorothy's heart was glad, however much she might pretend to be offended. But aside from the passing interest she felt in every man, she had no particular favor to show to Campbell Crosby. And so she frowned as she answered, "Please don't talk like that, Mr. Crosby. Do you know, I can't help thinking something has happened to Justin."

"Nonsense! He'll turn up at dinner-time, hungry as a hunter, and with a perfectly good explanation of where he's been and what he's been up to."

"Oh, do you think so?" said Dorothy, with a sigh of relief. Somehow the opinion of this big lawyer man, though expressed carelessly, had more weight with her than the opinions of wise experts and doctors. And though she frankly admitted to herself that she loved Ernest Chapin and did not love Justin Arnold, yet she fully intended to marry the latter, and, too, she shrank from the fear that any tragedy had occurred.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," went on Crosby. "Gale and I have a most important case requiring our attention in Boston just now, but as soon as he heard the news this morning, he decreed that we should come down here at once—both of us. And you may be sure that I raised no objection."

The admiring look that accompanied this speech gave a lead that Dorothy followed almost unconsciously, so accustomed was she to this sort of thing.

"I'm glad you did n't object too strongly," she answered, and the swift rise and fall of her long lashes added a deeper meaning to the words than they possessed. Indeed, they did n't possess any, and Dorothy was really thinking of something else at the time, but this was her way with a man.

"Does that mean you're glad I'm here? Oh, Dorothy, let it mean that! Please do!"

Dorothy looked at him provokingly, tantalizingly. "Of course I'm glad you're here. You and Mr. Gale will help us find Justin, won't you?"

"Do leave Justin out for a moment, and think only of me."

"I will—for a moment." Dorothy leaned against the vine-clad pillar and gazed intently at the young man. There was a mocking smile in her eyes that irritated, while it fascinated, him.

He returned her gaze steadily, and said in low, tense tones, "You think it's just for a moment, don't you? Well, you're going to look at me like that for the rest of your life!"

Dorothy burst into a merry laugh. Accustomed though she was to admiration, and even to sudden proposals, this calm announcement of Crosby's seemed the most audacious thing she had ever heard.

"Guess again," she said saucily. "As soon as you find Justin for me, I shall reserve all my gazes for him, and for him only."

"But suppose," began Crosby, speaking slowly and very seriously—"suppose Justin——"

"I know what you're going to say: suppose Justin never comes back? I have begun to suppose that. I can't help it. It's very mysterious, but it must be that something has happened to him. What could it be, Mr. Crosby?"

"How should I know? He was all right when I left here yesterday. But, Dorothy, listen to me a moment. If he should never return, if you are freed from him forever, won't you let me——"

Dorothy interrupted him a little sharply. "Don't talk like that, Mr. Crosby. This is no time for such a subject."

"But the time *will* come, and I can wait, my beautiful Dorothy!"

Campbell Crosby was a tall man, of fine physique and bearing. And as he stood calmly looking down at little Dorothy, he gave an impression of splendid power, and the girl looked at him with a new admiration. She liked a masterful man, and, though she had never taken any special interest in Campbell Crosby, she suddenly realized that he was a worth-while man. But then the thought of Ernest Chapin returned to her, and she knew that, compared to him, all other men were as nothing to her.

"Campbell," she said, sending a thrill through him as he heard her pronounce his name, "I want to ask you something. Is there any secret passage of any kind in this old house?"

"Secret passage! What do you mean?"

"Why, I'm determined to find Justin, myself, if possible. Now, they all say he could n't have gotten out of this house last night. But if there is a secret passage that no one knows about, of course he could have gone out that way. And they said that you would know if there was one."

"Who said that?" asked Crosby.

"Why, I don't know—Miss Wadsworth, I think. At any rate, they all agreed that if any such thing exists, you would be likely to know about it."

"Of course I should. I know every nook and corner of this house, both the old original structure and the modern additions. You see, I always spent my summers here as a boy, and Justin and I were everlastingly exploring the place. No, Dorothy, there is no secret passage. Those things are built in mediæval castles, or sometimes in old English mansions, but I fancy there are not many in America. At any rate, there are no sliding panels or staircases in the wall at White Birches. Of that I'm positive."

"I thought there could n't be," said Dorothy, "or we should have

heard of it before. But then, Campbell, where is Justin, and how *did* he get out of the house?"

Crosby passed his hand wearily across his brow. "Dorothy dear," he said, "I fear that question will be asked many times before it is answered. Of course, my own theory——"

Some of the others joined them just then, and as Dorothy took little interest in theories, when she wanted to learn facts, she did not ask Crosby to finish his sentence.

Conversation at dinner touched more or less upon the subject of the mystery, but the talk was not general, and each one merely exchanged views with his neighbor. The vacant chair at the head of the table cast an atmosphere of gloom over the diners. Little was eaten, and all were glad when Miss Wadsworth gave the signal to rise.

Nor was it long before the men drifted into the library, where the women sat awaiting them.

"It seems to me," began Miss Wadsworth, "that the time has come to do something more definite in our search for Justin. We have asked Mr. Gale and Mr. Crosby, as lawyers, to advise us, but I think that we must employ the the services of some professional."

"You mean a detective?" asked Fred Crane. "I thought you seriously objected to that."

"I did at first; but since I've talked with Mr. Gale, I'm more reconciled to the idea."

"I think the matter is a very grave one," said Emory Gale, tacitly assuming an attitude of leading the discussion, somewhat to the discomfiture of Mr. Crane, who himself coveted that position. "We have few facts to work upon," continued Gale, "but they are startling ones and apparently inexplicable. We are convinced that the extreme efficacy of the burglar-alarm prevented Arnold from leaving the house; and yet he is not to be found in the house. Of course I am assuming that the search of the house has been thorough, as I am informed it has been. There has been suggestion of a secret panel leading to a concealed staircase or passage through the wall, but this idea seems to me fanciful. Had there been such a thing, we doubtless would have known of it, for Arnold was fond of exhibiting such features of the house as were peculiar or interesting. Crosby, you know the house well. Does it contain any secret doors or passages?"

"It does not," replied Crosby. "As boys, Justin and I explored every part of the estate, both house and grounds, and no such passage exists."

"Then we may eliminate that theory," went on Gale; "and so we are again confronted by a blank wall of seeming contradictions. Arnold is not in the house—yet he could not get out of the house. But there

must be an explanation, and, speaking theoretically, I can find but two possible ones. Either he left the house by the assistance or connivance of some one inside its walls, or else he had a means of exit unknown to others."

Though these suggestions were somewhat veiled, every one understood that what Gale really meant was that he suspected that some one in the house, either guest or servant, knew more than had been told.

But without enlarging on this point, the speaker went on: "However, if he did leave the house, by any means whatever, I cannot think it possible that he left the grounds; the only exit being the great gate, and no human being could go out through that and fasten its chains and bolts again on the inside. Nor could he get over the absolutely unscalable wall. So without advancing it as a theory exactly, I can't help a vague impression that Arnold might have gone for a walk in the grounds after midnight, and fallen by accident into some deep pool or well. I know this sounds somewhat unpalatable, but I can't think of anything else that will be a rational explanation of the man's disappearance. And that he went away intending to mystify us all, I shall never believe. So my advice, since it has been asked, is to put the matter into professional hands. I myself should inform the police, but Miss Wadsworth and Mrs. Duncan naturally shrink from giving the affair so much publicity. So, to my mind, the next best plan is to send at once for the best detective from the New York Central Office."

"I quite agree with you," observed Mr. Crane. "I'm sure it is a case for a detective, but I warn you he will find it hard to discover any clues. Mrs. Crane and I went over the grounds carefully this afternoon, and we found no foot-prints, nor any suggestive indications of any sort."

Mr. Crane spoke as if he were giving information of vast importance, but Gale did not seem especially impressed. "One could hardly expect to find foot-prints in this weather," he said. "It is clear and cold and the ground is hard. Of course the gravel walks would show no footprints, nor the stone pavements. I think a detective will scarcely depend upon clues of that sort—though I must admit I can't see what he will find to depend on. To me, the affair is entirely mysterious, unless there has been foul play of some sort."

This was the first time foul play had been definitely mentioned, and everybody started at the idea. Dorothy threw herself into her mother's arms and began to cry. Leila Duane and Mabel Crane were whispering together earnestly, while Miss Wadsworth sat bolt upright, her face turning ashy white at the suggestion.

The men too all looked disturbed at the thought. All modern, up-

to-date men of the world, their minds immediately jumped to thoughts of what it would mean if there were really tragedy, possibly crime, and the unpleasant details of public exposure.

Mr. Crane, perhaps, had thought of this before, for he nodded his head gravely, with an expression of superior sagacity; but the others seemed appalled, and sat quiet, but deeply thoughtful.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CHECK STUB

As Miss Wadsworth was naturally the one to be consulted, and as she had expressed her willingness, Gale telephoned at once to the Central Office for a detective. He was advised that James Wheeler would be sent the next morning, and that Mr. Wheeler was one of the best and cleverest men on the force.

"Meantime, let us be doing something by way of investigation," said Gale, who was of an impatient nature. "What do you say, Miss Wadsworth, do you think I'm justified in looking through the papers in Arnold's desk or safe? I don't want to intrude, but might n't we learn something, perhaps, that way?"

Miss Abby considered. "As his lawyer, Mr. Gale, I think you have a perfect right to look over his papers. As confidential secretary, Mr. Chapin also has a right. So if you and Mr. Crosby and Mr. Chapin choose to go over his business papers, I'm sure I have no objections."

The three men went off on their errand, and if Mr. Crane felt any chagrin at not being asked to accompany them, he successfully concealed it.

Following Ernest Chapin, Gale and Crosby soon found themselves in the pleasant room which Justin Arnold used as his business office, though its elaborate appointments made such a name seem inappropriate.

Everything was in perfect order, for Arnold was methodical and systematic in all his ways, and his secretary was no less so.

With professional rapidity, Gale and Crosby ran through the desk. There was nothing in any of the business papers, letters, or books of memoranda to indicate anything unusual or mysterious in the life or habits of Justin Arnold.

At the request of the lawyers, Ernest Chapin opened the great safe, which was built into the wall, and which was of modern and elaborate device. Here too everything was in order. Certain bonds and deeds were there, and memoranda told of others that were in banks or safety deposit vaults.

The extent of their client's wealth was a slight surprise to both Gale and Crosby, for though they had known Arnold to be a rich man, they did not know the extent of his fortune. Emory Gale gave a low

whistle as he read some of the statements, but Crosby said frankly, "By George! I did n't know old Justin had such a lot of money!"

"His investments for many years have turned out very favorably," said Ernest Chapin, but he spoke in a dull, hard voice, and with a preoccupied air, as if thinking of other matters.

"Well, there's certainly nothing here by way of a clue to steer us in any direction," remarked Gale; "but I'm glad, Crosby, that we went through these papers ourselves. Now there's no need of that detective prying into them. We can assure him that there's absolutely nothing to be found that would throw any light on Justin's disappearance."

"That's so," agreed Crosby. "Hello, Gale, here's his private check-book. I suppose we ought to look through that, though it does seem horribly intrusive."

"Is it necessary?" asked Ernest Chapin, making a half-involuntary movement, as if to take the book.

Campbell Crosby looked at him curiously. A flush had risen to Chapin's temples, and a slight quiver in his voice showed an agitation he was striving hard to control.

Crosby noted this, and said coolly, "Why, yes, I think it is necessary." So saying, he opened the book and ran over the stubs. They seemed innocent enough, and suggested nothing mysterious. The names on the stubs were mostly such firms as tailors or hatters, with here and there a friend's name or that of a charitable organization. About to return it to its place, Crosby caught sight of the last entry, and he stared at it in astonishment. "Why, Chapin, this last stub is for a check made out to you, for five thousand dollars!" he said.

"Yes?" said Chapin, in a faint voice, while his face went white. "Is it?"

"It is," went on Crosby; "and, what's more, it's dated *to-day*. To-day, October seventh! Have you seen Arnold to-day?"

"N-no," stammered Chapin; "well, that is, not exactly to-day."

"What nonsense are you talking?" demanded Gale. "What do you mean by 'not exactly to-day'? Why did Arnold give you a check for five thousand dollars? You *have* seen him to-day? Where is he?"

This rapid fire of angry questions seemed to restore Chapin's self-possession, and he answered coldly, "I resent the tone you use, Mr. Gale, and I refuse to answer questions couched in such language. As Mr. Arnold's secretary, and in his confidence, I refuse to discuss any expenditures he may have made, whether to myself or any one else."

"But, man alive," went on Gale, in amazement, "don't take that attitude! Don't array yourself against us! Are we not all working for the same end? Are we not all interested in finding Arnold? And if

you have seen him to-day, and this check is dated to-day, you *must* tell us!"

"You have no right to say 'must' to me, Mr. Gale."

"Oh, don't quibble about words," said Crosby. "Explain it, Chapin, as man to man. Have you the check that was torn from that stub?"

"Of course I have. Mr. Arnold gave it to me."

"When?"

"I must ask what right you gentlemen have to cross-question me. Am I on trial?"

"You are not," said Gale coldly; "but if you persist in showing such strong disinclination to answer questions bearing directly on the business in hand, I am forced to think you ought to be on trial. I ask you in a friendly manner to explain the peculiar circumstance of your receiving a large check from Justin Arnold to-day, when nobody else knows where the man is."

Chapin looked both injured and sullen. "The check is of a private and personal nature," he said, at last. "Mr. Arnold gave it to me last night, here in this office. As it was after midnight when he drew the check, of course he dated it to-day. As I have already declared, I left Mr. Arnold here last night at about half-past twelve. That's what I meant by saying I had n't exactly seen him to-day. Of course, last night after midnight was literally to-day, and it was before Mr. Arnold's mysterious disappearance."

Emory Gale looked perturbed and a little suspicious. Campbell Crosby looked frankly amazed. It might all be exactly as Chapin had said, and Justin Arnold might have had ample reasons for presenting his secretary with a sum of money probably equal to his year's salary; but it was a peculiar coincidence that the man should disappear immediately afterward. If Chapin had treated it lightly, and explained why he received so large a sum at one time, and whether or not it was by way of salary, the lawyers would have thought little of it. But when the secretary was so evidently rattled, so unwilling to explain matters, and so clearly annoyed at being questioned, it was but natural for the two lawyers to feel some curiosity concerning the occurrence.

However, Emory Gale, who was perhaps more far-sighted than his junior partner, said calmly, "You're right, Mr. Chapin; it is n't exactly in our province to question you. Whatever conclusions we may draw from the examination of the papers are of course our own affairs, as your relations with your employer are yours."

Though spoken quietly, Mr. Gale's words seemed to have a deeper meaning than was apparent on the surface, and the pallor that overspread Ernest Chapin's face proved that he realized this. Leaving the agitated secretary with the check-book in his hand, and the safe open beside him, Mr. Gale and Mr. Crosby walked away.

"Deucedly queer development!" said Crosby; and Gale returned, "It's more than that. To my mind, it implicates Chapin pretty deeply in the matter. But it isn't up to us to probe the case. When the detective comes to-morrow, he can do that. Any way, Chapin can't run away as long as this place is guarded like a fortress. I wonder if they'll turn on their precious burglar-alarm to-night."

"Of course they will. Old Driggs always did it when Justin was away, so, naturally, he'll attend to it."

Soon after breakfast the next morning Ernest Chapin made an opportunity to see Dorothy alone.

"Listen to me," he said, without preamble. "That detective is coming at ten o'clock, and I want to remind you, once more, to say nothing about Arnold's seeing us on the balcony together. The detective will question you, but no good can possibly come of your telling of that scene, and it might result in harm."

"Well, I won't; but I want you to tell me what Justin said to you after I left you."

"Nothing of any importance—as I told you before."

"Was he angry?"

"Yes, he was." And then, as if on a sudden impulse, Chapin whispered earnestly to the girl, "Dorothy, darling, if you'll only admit you love me—I know you do—I'll tell you everything about it. What Arnold said, and all that happened."

Dorothy's eyes opened wide. "Ernest, you don't mean that you know anything about Justin's going away!"

"I'll tell you nothing," he returned doggedly, "until you tell me what I ask. Tell me, dear."

Dorothy looked at him with a gentle tenderness. "Ernest," she said softly, "this is n't the time or place for such a question."

"Yes, it is, darling. There could n't be a more beautiful place than this terrace, with the bright sunshine and blue sky above, and no one near to overhear us. Answer me, Dorothy. Crown my happiness of loving you, by your dear confession that you love me."

Dorothy was strongly tempted to tell this man that she did love him. She longed to see his eyes light up with the happiness that she knew such an admission would bring. Then her glance roved out over the wide domain spread out before her; the beautiful terrace on which they stood, and the great mansion behind them. Could she give up all this for her love of Ernest Chapin? It did n't seem to her that she could. Then, at the intrusion of a sudden thought, she ignored her lover's pleading, and said, "As Justin's secretary, Mr. Chapin, of course you know all about his business matters. If he should—if he should never come back, who would own White Birches?"

"I am not quite sure. If Mr. Arnold made no will, his whole

estate will go to Campbell Crosby; but if he made a will—and I'm quite sure he did, though I've never seen it—of course the disposition of his fortune will be in accordance with that. I do know that he intended to make a new will before his marriage, leaving everything to you, but whether he has done so or not, I'm not sure."

"His lawyers will know, won't they?"

"Yes; unless he made merely a private memorandum, which, if signed, will be valid. But, Dorothy, why talk as if he were dead? He can't be! And, oh, child, if he is, if he *should* be, you don't mean, you *can't* mean, that you want to know who inherits White Birches—to know where to turn your affections next!"

Dorothy had the grace to look ashamed of herself, and, moved by Chapin's evident misery, she said softly, "If Justin never returns, there is only one place for my affections."

The look she gave Chapin left no doubt of her meaning, and, taking both her hands in his, he said, "Oh, darling, you've admitted it at last! You make me so happy, dear, and, whether Arnold returns or not, he shall never claim you after that admission!"

"Oh, yes, he will! I'm bound to him, and of course he will return, and of course I shall marry him. But now tell me what he said to you. You promised you would."

"He was n't at all nice, dear. He accused me of being a traitor to him, and of acting dishonorably in loving the girl he was engaged to."

"Well, it is n't very honorable, is it?"

"All's fair in love and war. And, any way, if I could win you only through dishonor, I would pause at no crime!"

"Oh, Ernest, what a dreadful speech! *Don't* say such things. You make me shiver!"

"But it's true, Dorothy: I would hesitate at *nothing*, if *you* were the reward."

Just then Gale and Leila returned from a walk through the grounds, and though Dorothy greeted them casually, as if her conversation with Chapin were most unimportant, the man could not so easily shake off a feeling of self-consciousness. To hide it, he became glum and taciturn, responding in monosyllables, when he spoke at all.

"We did n't find any clues around the place," said Leila. "Now we're going to look through the house. Mr. Gale and I have discovered that we both have the 'detective instinct,' and we're working together on this case." It was clear to the most incurious observer that Gale and Leila were more interested in their discoveries about each other than in their "case," but Dorothy had affairs of her own on her mind, and Chapin was uninterested, so the two amateur detectives passed on into the house to continue their search.

In a few moments Leila came running back. "Dorothy," she cried,

"did you take a green sofa-pillow from the couch in the library? The one embroidered in gold thread?"

"No, Leila, I have n't seen it. Why should I take a sofa-cushion from its place?"

"Well, it's gone; and nobody knows anything about it, and we think it is a clue!"

"Oh, Leila, how ridiculous! How could a missing sofa-pillow be a clue? Probably one of the maids took it to mend it, or something."

"No," and Leila spoke positively; "it did n't need mending. It was a new one, and it was so pretty that I was going to copy the embroidery. That's the way I happened to miss it. It's gone, and nobody knows anything about it!"

"It does seem queer," said Gale, who had followed Leila out.

"Fiddlesticks!" said Dorothy. "If you two people were n't so anxious to make anything serve as a clue, you'd know that that sofa-pillow would turn up somewhere. Do you suppose Justin kidnapped it and took it away, or do you suppose a burglar came in through a key-hole, purposely to get it?"

Ernest Chapin looked thoughtful. "Did it have a thick gold cord all round it, and tassels at one corner?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Leila eagerly. "Did you take it away, Mr. Chapin?"

"No," and Ernest Chapin spoke slowly; "I remember having seen it in the library, that is all."

Leila and Gale went away to make further search for the sofa-pillow, and Chapin fell into a brown study, from which even Dorothy's chatter failed to rouse him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FOUND!

DETECTIVE WHEELER was plain and straightforward in his methods. No sly and subtle manœuvring for him. Plain facts, and logical deductions therefrom, constituted his stock-in-trade. His manner was a trifle pompous, as fitted his calling, but he was courteous and deferential, and liked quick action when once he set about his business.

He arrived promptly at ten o'clock, and was received by the assembled household in the library.

After introductions had been made, Mr. Wheeler glanced shrewdly about the assembly, and concluded that, while Miss Wadsworth was the head of the house, he preferred to ask his direct questions of a man. Though the confidential secretary was perhaps the best informed as to his employer's habits and customs, yet a glance at Chapin's gloomy and forbidding face caused the detective to look in another direction.

Mr. Crane, he deemed too officious and too anxious to give information, so he settled on the firm of lawyers, and chose Gale, as being the senior member.

Mr. Wheeler did not say that he had thus made an intentional selection, nor did it take him more than a moment to make up his mind. With a quiet manner, that somehow held the rest listening in silence, he asked questions of Emory Gale. In a few moments he was in possession of the main facts of the case as known.

"Do you think Mr. Arnold could have been drowned?" he asked abruptly.

"No," replied Gale; "I don't think that."

"Do you think he is, for any reason, hiding on purpose?"

"I do not," said Gale decidedly.

"He is not, then, a man who would do such a thing, say, as a practical joke?"

"Decidedly not!" said Gale emphatically.

Wheeler nodded his head. "I understand," he proceeded, "that Mr. Arnold was more or less in the habit of walking in his grounds at night. I mean, when he had no guests, he was given to prowling about among the trees."

"That is true," volunteered Miss Wadsworth, as Gale seemed a little uncertain on this point.

"When he took such walks, did he usually wear hat and overcoat?"

"Yes," replied Miss Abby; "a coat according to the weather, but always a hat. Justin never went out without a hat."

Remembering his fairly well advanced state of baldness, no one was surprised at this.

"Then," went on Mr. Wheeler, "have you investigated his wardrobe, and learned what hat and coat are missing?"

No one had thought to do this, and the valet was summoned to answer questions.

"Peters," said Mr. Wheeler, "do you know all the hats and coats in Mr. Arnold's possession?"

"Certainly, sir," said Peters, with the respectful assurance of the well-trained servant.

"And could you tell if any were missing?"

"Yes, sir."

"And have you made any search?"

"Not to say, sir, exactly a search, but I could n't help noticing that all Mr. Arnold's hats and top-coats are in their places, and I wondered, sir, what he might have worn on his head when he went away."

"You're positive, Peters, that there is no hat or overcoat missing?"

"I'm positive, sir."

"Has any guest present, or any of the servants, missed a hat or a cap?"

Investigation soon proved that nobody had missed any.

"Mr. Arnold was in evening dress when last seen?"

"Yes," answered Miss Abby; "Justin was always in evening dress after six o'clock. He was most punctilious in that respect, like his father before him."

"And that suit of evening clothes is not in his wardrobe, Peters?"

"No, sir."

"Nor his shoes, nor tie, nor any of the garments that he wore the last time you assisted at his toilet?"

"No, sir; they are all missing from his wardrobe."

"And no other garments are missing?"

"No, sir."

"Then, we are justified in concluding," said Mr. Wheeler, turning to the assembly, "that wherever Mr. Arnold may have gone, he wore the suit of clothes he had on during the evening of his disappearance, and he added no hat or outer garment. This, in addition to the fact that he could not get out of this carefully protected house, leads me to conclude that he is still in the house. Yes, I know you have searched thoroughly, but you must have overlooked his hiding-place. It is extremely improbable that, even if Mr. Arnold could have left the house unseen, any emergency would have caused him to go bareheaded. But before I proceed to work in accordance with my own theory, I will ask if any one has any suggestion to offer, or any information, however slight, to give that could throw light on the matter."

"Mr. Wheeler," said Leila Duane, a little diffidently, "it may be of no importance, but I discovered this morning that a sofa-pillow was missing from the couch in this room. It was here, I am sure, day before yesterday, and now it is gone. I have questioned the servants, and no one knows anything about it."

There were half a dozen sofa pillows still on the broad-seated divan, and the detective looked slightly amused, as if one pillow more or less could really have no bearing on the case in hand.

"It may seem trivial," observed Gale, moved by a desire to lend importance to Leila's suggestion, if possible, "but you must admit, Mr. Wheeler, that a sofa pillow could n't get away of itself."

"No," agreed the detective gravely; "but I cannot think, Mr. Gale, that its disappearance is in any way a clue to the disappearance of Mr. Arnold. Unless he were demented, which I am informed he is not, he would scarcely go out into the night with a sofa pillow tied on his head."

Leila looked a little chagrined at this summary dismissal of what she had fondly considered a clue; or, at least, a mysterious circum-

stance which might have a bearing on the greater mystery. But Mr. Wheeler made no further reference to the green sofa-pillow, and detailed at once his plans for searching the house.

"Since Mr. Arnold could not get out," he commenced briskly, "he must be in the house; and we cannot say he is not, until we have made an exhaustive search of the entire building. I cannot think the search that has already been made was sufficiently thorough. I will, therefore, in my direction of this case, request the assistance of such servants as I may desire to help me, and any of the men of the household who wish to may also accompany me. We will make a search that shall leave no foot of space unexplored."

Mr. Wheeler selected two of the footmen to assist him in this undertaking, and Mr. Crane volunteered also to accompany him.

Leila Duane declared that she would go, too, but Dorothy sat quietly by her mother's side, and said that nothing would induce her to go into those dark, dusty old attics again.

As a matter of course, therefore, Gale elected to accompany Leila, and Campbell Crosby remained in the library, hovering near Dorothy. Ernest Chapin, still looking gloomy as a thunder-cloud, also hovered near the pathetic little figure of the girl he loved.

In accordance with his chosen methods, Mr. Wheeler began his search in systematic order. Desiring to begin at the top of the house, he went first of all to the roof, and made his preliminary examinations from the outside. Although the servants showed him the way, he often skipped ahead of them, and showed agility and despatch in accomplishing his errands. Though they followed him to the roof, the others did not follow his various trips from one gable to another as he scurried over the various slopes and flats of tin, shingle, and mansard.

His definite motive was to examine every possible exit from the house, no matter how improbable it might seem. He peered down chimneys, he looked in at dormer windows, he looked in at trap-doors and scuttles, jotting down in his note-book into what rooms they opened.

"What does this old scuttle open into?" he asked, as he looked down into pitch darkness beneath.

"I don't know exactly," answered a servant, "but I think it opens into a little loft over an ell which contains some of the servants' rooms."

Again the detective peered down into the darkness. "That's what it is," he said; "and I can see a door from the loft, but it seems to be nailed up. I'll investigate it when we're inside the attics."

The man's energy was indefatigable. He left nothing unexamined, even looking down the leader-pipes and gutters. At last he expressed himself satisfied with his investigation of the roof, and they returned through the trap-door they had come up by, to the attics. These were numerous and rambling, but not one was omitted in the search. Every

dark corner of every room, every cupboard under the eaves, every fireplace, was thoroughly illuminated by electric torches and exhaustively searched.

The tiny loft over the ell into which Wheeler had peered from above was found to have but one door, which was carefully nailed up; and, as could be easily seen from its dust and cobwebs, it had not been disturbed for decades, therefore it could not have been used recently as an exit.

They found absolutely no trace or even possibility of Justin Arnold's having left the house by means of a route through the attics.

In rotation, the other stories were searched with the same infinite care. The detective was looking not only for the missing man, but for any clue or indication that might point toward his whereabouts.

Leila grew a little weary of the delay occasioned by such excessive minutiae of searching, but she would not listen to Gale's suggestion that they return to the library and join the others, for she was determined to follow the detective.

Of course a careful investigation was made in Arnold's own rooms, but these were as unproductive as the rest of the house. The rooms on the ground floor also yielded no clue, and, after a search of the kitchens and servants' quarters, Mr. Wheeler started for the cellars.

Both Gale and Leila were interested in the appointments of the basement, for many of its various rooms were fitted up with modern household inventions and domestic appliances. Mr. Crane kept up a running fire of comment on what he saw, and also gave choice bits of unsolicited advice to the detective, whose mind was intent only on letting no obscure bit of space elude his vigilance.

They came at last to the cellars under the oldest part of the house. These, being built in the time of Justin's grandfather, and not having been improved upon since, were quaint and interesting. They were unused, and contained many kitchen utensils and pieces of antique furniture that would have delighted the heart of a collector. But while Gale and Leila paused to examine an old fireplace with a hinged crane, or an old settle or churn, Mr. Wheeler darted from one small room to another, flashing his electric torch everywhere.

Suddenly he returned to where Gale and Leila stood examining an old pewter lamp.

"Miss Duane," he said peremptorily, and in a quick, excited voice, "go upstairs at once."

"Why?" demanded Leila, in surprise, but a glance at Wheeler's face impelled her to obey him.

"Don't ask why," he went on gravely. "Go back upstairs at once—and join the others in the library, or wherever they are, and stay there. Mr. Gale, please remain here."

Leila was already on the staircase, an old flight of wooden steps, and Gale was about to follow her, when detained by Wheeler.

Realizing that ill news was impending, Gale waited only until Leila had disappeared through the door at the head of the stairs, and had closed it behind her, then, turning to Wheeler, he said, "Where is he?"

"Come," returned the detective, and led the way to the next room, where the two footmen stood shivering and with horror-stricken faces. It was a small apartment, with walls that had once been whitewashed, but were now blackened with age. It contained one or two old tables and broken chairs, and in the wall was a large iron door. Although Gale had only indefinite knowledge of such a thing, he knew at once it was the door of an old-fashioned brick oven.

"We have solved the mystery," said Mr. Wheeler, very gravely, "and it is a tragedy. Be prepared for the worst."

He opened the door of the huge old bake-oven, and within Emory Gale saw the bent body of a man, fully dressed.

"It is Justin!" he exclaimed. "It is murder! It cannot be suicide, can it?"

"Not unless the man was really demented," said Wheeler. "I think, Mr. Gale, we should send for the coroner at once, but I think it wiser to take out the body and examine it first."

"But is it not forbidden to touch a body until the Coroner arrives?"

"That is a fallacy believed in by many people, but untrue. I think, if you agree, Mr. Gale, our wisest course is to learn any further detail we may concerning Mr. Arnold's death—for he is certainly dead—before we make a report upstairs."

In the excitement of the moment, both men had forgotten Fred Crane, who stood in the background, as dumb with horror as were the two servants.

It was somewhat to Crane's credit that he offered no advice at this juncture, but stepped forward and announced himself entirely at Mr. Wheeler's orders, if he could be of any assistance.

The two footmen were practically useless, and it devolved on the others to remove the body of Justin Arnold from the old oven and lay it upon a table.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Gale, with a little gasp, "there's the sofa pillow!"

The green silk sofa-pillow which had been missed by Leila lay against Arnold's breast, and was bound about his body by its own gilt cord, which had been torn from its edges.

With his usual swift, deft movements, Mr. Wheeler unbound the pillow, and, turning to the others, said, "You see! Mr. Arnold was stabbed through the heart, probably while in the library, for the

murderer has bound this pillow over the wound to staunch the flow of blood."

There was no doubt about it, and the detective's statement of facts made the others realize that this was no time for emotion or grief, but a stern situation to be met and coped with.

Suppressing a sob, Emory Gale said, "You are quite right, Mr. Wheeler; there is no doubt poor old Justin has been murdered. It only remains for us now to do all we can to break it gently to the others, and to attend to the sad details for them. I thank you, Mr. Wheeler, for your thoughtful tact in sending Miss Duane away before you disclosed the tragedy."

"Yes, yes," returned Wheeler, his mind preoccupied with various details of what his own duties now must be.

As the detective had now performed his task, and the case must go to the coroner and the police, Emory Gale accepted, at least temporarily, the directorship of the situation.

"You two men," he said to the shuddering footmen, "must stay here in reverent charge of your master's body, until some official shall come to relieve you. Mr. Wheeler, you must do whatever your judgment dictates, and Mr. Crane and I will take upon ourselves the task of informing the family."

"Yes, yes, quite right," said Wheeler; "quite a correct arrangement. I will go upstairs with you, as of course you must know, gentlemen, that after more immediate details are attended to we must find the wretch who murdered Mr. Arnold."

"Who could it have been?" exclaimed Fred Crane, realizing for the first time that they were in the presence of an even greater tragedy than that of death.

"That's not a question to be asked now, and perhaps not to be answered soon," replied Wheeler. "Come, let us go upstairs."

The three men went to the library, where all of the others were assembled. Leila's sudden and frightened appearance among them had led them to expect some startling development, but they were all unprepared for the news they must hear.

Though a terrible ordeal, Emory Gale was obliged to tell the story, but the audience had already read in the faces of the three men more than a hint of a tragedy.

"What has become of Justin Arnold is no longer a mystery," Gale began, and though he knew his deepest sympathies should be for Dorothy and Miss Wadsworth, yet his glance wandered uncontrollably to Leila. "We know what has happened to him; and it is the most tragic fate that could overtake a man." He hesitated a moment, and then, realizing that perhaps it were kinder to end the suspense, he added in a low tone, "He has been killed."

To the credit of the nerves of the women present, not one of them fainted or made any outcry. Dorothy put her head down on her mother's shoulder and wept softly. Leila and Mabel Crane were stunned by the news, but bore it with outward calm. Miss Wadsworth, with a manner highly indicative of her own strength of character, sat bolt upright in her chair and looked steadily at Gale. "I don't quite understand," she said, and the tremble in her voice was pathetic. "What do you mean, Mr. Gale?"

"I cannot bear to tell you the details, Miss Wadsworth," said Gale, with a pitying glance at the old lady; "but the simple and dreadful fact is that we have discovered Justin's body, and have learned that he was murdered—by whom we do not know."

Miss Wadsworth almost fainted, as she at last realized what had happened.

Ernest Chapin rose and went to her side, but as he sat down by her he found himself unable to speak. Campbell Crosby, too, though he essayed to say something, found his voice choked beyond utterance. Appreciating the natural feeling of the relatives and friends, Mr. Wheeler took the initiative.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CORONER'S INVESTIGATION

"ALTHOUGH," began Mr. Wheeler, "the work for which I was employed is accomplished, I will, if I may, continue to direct affairs here for a brief period. It is necessary that the coroner be summoned at once, and as upon his arrival he will take full charge of the case, I assume I may consider my services no longer required."

But Miss Wadsworth was of a sort that could rise to an emergency. Bravely striving to put aside her grief, she forced herself to consider the immediate requirements of the case.

"Mr. Wheeler," she began, "you have indeed accomplished the work for which you were employed, but, for my part, I do not feel ready to dispense with your services. We have found my cousin"—here the old voice trembled, but immediately became steady again—"now we must find his murderer and avenge his death. An Arnold shall not be killed without every effort being made to bring justice to the miserable wretch who committed the deed! In so far as I have any authority, I wish to employ you, Mr. Wheeler, to discover whose was the hand that killed him."

Mr. Wheeler merely bowed in acknowledgment of this, for he was not quite sure that Miss Wadsworth was sufficiently in authority to employ him.

"Although I have been seemingly directing matters here," said

Emory Gale, "it is not now my province to continue. My partner, Mr. Crosby, is Justin Arnold's cousin, and is naturally heir to his estate, unless it be otherwise willed. Campbell Crosby therefore ought now to assume his place as head of this house."

Crosby's handsome face looked disturbed and troubled. It seemed as if he were unwilling to profit thus suddenly by his cousin's terrible death. Indeed, all present were unnerved and bewildered by the shock they had received, and it was difficult for any of them to think coherently.

When Campbell Crosby spoke, it was not directly in reply to Gale's suggestion.

"It seems to me," he said slowly, almost as if thinking aloud, "that, even before notifying the coroner, we should send for Justin's family physician."

"Of course," agreed Mr. Wheeler, in his quick way; "I should have thought of that myself. But I'm unaccustomed to managing outside my own field of labor, and I confess I did not think of it. Certainly we must send for the doctor."

The men began to pull themselves together, and if Mr. Crane was perhaps a little over-officious in his offers of assistance, those more nearly related to the dead man were glad to have his aid.

So Mr. Crane telephoned for Doctor Gaspard, and took it upon himself to go and notify the servants of the tragedy, incidentally taking the opportunity to give them some orders on his own account. Mr. Crane rarely had opportunity to give orders to a corps of trained servants, and he thought it no harm to snatch his chance when it offered.

Meantime, Mr. Wheeler notified the coroner, and advised him to come as soon as possible.

"It is perfectly clear," said Wheeler to Campbell Crosby, whom he now looked upon as the head of the house, "that the murderer must have been some one already in the house, as of course no one could get in after the alarm was turned on. Therefore, Mr. Crosby, I'm sure you will agree with me in thinking it was either one of the servants or some intruder who was concealed in the house during the evening."

"I think your second theory is better," said Crosby thoughtfully. "I cannot believe it of one of the servants. They are nearly all old and trustworthy retainers. And he was such a kind master—who could have had a motive?"

"I know so little about Mr. Arnold, I cannot yet judge," said the detective, "but surely, with this hermetically-sealed house, it cannot be difficult to discover which of its inmates is guilty."

"It would seem so," agreed Crosby; "and yet sometimes what seem to be the simplest cases turn out the most complex."

The two indulged in no further theorizing just then, for Doctor

Gaspard arrived. He immediately went downstairs to see what he could learn from an examination of the body of Justin Arnold.

On his return he had little to report further than they already knew.

He said that Arnold had been killed by a stab from some long, pointed instrument, probably a dagger. The deed must have been done so swiftly that the victim could not even cry out. The fact of the body being placed where the flue of the chimney made a continuous draft had caused it to remain in a fair state of preservation. The sofa pillow had been placed immediately against Arnold's breast in order that no blood might fall from the wound. It had then doubtless been bound to the body, by its own cord, hastily torn off, and the body carried to the cellar.

The fact that the pillow had been used seemed to show that the murder had been committed in the library, and the body taken downstairs for the purpose of concealment. How the murderer came or went, of course the doctor could not even suggest. That was a matter to be taken up later by the detective.

Aside from his professional interest in the Arnold family, Doctor Gaspard had always been a warm friend, both of Justin and his father. The present tragedy almost unnerved the old gentleman, and, though he remained to luncheon, he ate scarcely anything, and seemed unable to shake off his depression.

Nor did the others have any appetite for the meal. The dreadful happening seemed to have changed everything, and made even the ordinary routine of the day seem strange and distorted. Dorothy's pretty face looked white and drawn, and her dark eyes seemed twice their normal size.

Leila, less personally interested, was excited by the strangeness and mystery of it all. She wanted to set to work at once to discover the criminal, and waited impatiently for the coroner and his hoped-for revelations.

The farce of luncheon over, various groups gathered here and there to talk about the subject that engrossed them all.

Ernest Chapin found himself alone with Dorothy for a moment, on the Terrace.

"I can't talk about it!" he exclaimed, as if in agony. "How can those other men discuss it as if it were an every-day business affair? They propose coroners and detectives as if they were ordering workmen about."

"I feel as you do, Ernest," said Dorothy, her eyes full of tears. "All this discussion drives me frantic. I can't bring myself even to think about it calmly. And Leila is crazy to do 'detective work,' as she calls it, and find out who—who——"

"Don't try to say it, dear; and don't judge Leila too harshly. You know she was not so close to Justin as you were."

For the moment, Chapin seemed to ignore his own love for Dorothy in his rush of emotion for poor Arnold, but the next instant a realization came to him of what Arnold's death really meant to her, and he took a step toward her, whispering exultantly, "But you are now freed from him, and you are mine!"

"Oh, Ernest, don't!" cried Dorothy, in accents almost of agony, and then, leaving him abruptly, she almost ran back into the house.

Chapin stood leaning against a pillar, gazing out into vacancy across the gardens, when a swift motor-car whizzed up the drive and some strange men got out.

Instinctively, Chapin knew it was the coroner and his men, and he greeted them with forced courtesy.

"Coroner Fiske, I suppose?" he said, and, being answered in the affirmative, he showed the men into the house, where they were met by Crosby and Gale.

If Detective Wheeler's methods were systematic and expeditious, Coroner Fiske's were even more so. Though told at once that Mr. Crosby was now head of the house, he singled out Mr. Crane to answer his questions and to act as his guide. This he did because Crane was neither a relative nor so close a friend of the dead man as the others. Accompanied by the two aides he had brought, and led by Crane, he went at once to the cellar, where he was joined by Doctor Gaspard. Their official examination only corroborated what the doctor had already said.

"Where is the weapon?" asked the coroner, but as nobody had seen it, or even thought about it, he received no answer.

"That is enough," he said at last, and then gave directions that the body of the late Justin Arnold be removed to a more fitting place.

Then Mr. Fiske went back rapidly to the library, and announced to Campbell Crosby and Miss Wadsworth that he would hold a preliminary investigation then and there.

"It is n't exactly an inquest," he explained, "but it will be a searching investigation, and I must have every member of the household—family, guests, and servants—present or within immediate call."

In an incredibly short time all save a few of the servants had assembled in the library, and the investigation was begun.

"As the circumstances are unusual," said Mr. Fiske, "and, as far as we can see for the moment, the deed was probably committed by some one already within the walls, I must ask every one of you to answer readily and promptly any and all questions, without feeling in any case that query means suspicion. It is necessary that every one should tell everything he knows of the events of the night on which the murder was committed; for an incident of seemingly slight importance some-

times proves to be the very key to the mystery. Mr. Crosby, as present head of the house, I will question you first. At what hour did you last see Mr. Arnold on Monday night?"

Campbell Crosby started in amazement, and then realized that the coroner was not in possession of all the circumstances.

"I was not here Monday night," he said quietly. "I had been here spending the week-end, but Mr. Gale and myself returned to Boston on the afternoon train. From there we were summoned here yesterday by the tidings of my cousin's death."

"You were, then, in Boston Monday evening. What were you doing?"

Crosby looked as if inclined to resent this absurd questioning of one who was not present at the time of the crime, but the thought flashed across him that, as he was his cousin's legal heir, perhaps he would be subjected to close questioning.

"I dined at my hotel," he replied, "and afterward went to a Symphony Concert."

"And after that?"

"It was fairly late when the concert was over, and I went back to the Hotel Lorraine and turned in."

But though Crosby stood this questioning without comment, Gale was not willing to do so.

"If you'll excuse me, Mr. Coroner," he said, "you are wasting your time in asking questions concerning this matter of my partner or myself. Mr. Crosby telephoned me three or four times during the evening, and as we met at our law office Tuesday morning, and proceeded to our work for the day, I think we need not be further cross-questioned in connection with this matter."

"That is true, that is true," said Mr. Fiske, and he nervously tapped his pencil on the table before him, while Leila with her quick-witted intelligence immediately surmised that he was asking these questions by way of killing time, because he dreaded getting to the real truth of the matter. Leila had her own suspicions, and they were growing stronger every minute, until to her they seemed almost a certainty, and she wondered if every one else suspected the same culprit.

Coroner Fiske sighed, readjusted his spectacles, and turned next to Miss Wadsworth.

"You are housekeeper here?" he inquired courteously.

"Not housekeeper exactly," said Miss Abby, tossing her head ever so slightly. "Mrs. Garson has that position. I am Justin Arnold's cousin, or, rather, his father's cousin. This has always been my home, and my position is that of lady of the house."

"And will you please tell me the time and occasion of your last interview with Mr. Arnold?"

"There was no especial interview," said Miss Abby, a little crisply, for she had taken a dislike to the coroner. "After dinner Monday evening we all sat in the drawing-room. Then the ladies of the party, including myself, all went to their rooms at about twelve o'clock, I should think. I fancy the men did not stay down much later, for I heard them coming up about half past twelve. Further than that, I can tell you nothing of the events of Monday night."

Mrs. Duncan and Mrs. Crane were questioned next, but what they said was merely a repetition of Miss Wadsworth's testimony.

Then the coroner's attention was turned to Dorothy. The girl was desperately frightened, for Chapin had made her promise not to tell of their meeting on the balcony, and if she kept this promise, she could not be entirely truthful in her testimony.

So, in response to Mr. Fiske's inquiry, she asserted that she had gone upstairs with the other ladies at twelve o'clock, and that she had stopped for a short time in Miss Duane's room and had chatted there for perhaps twenty minutes, when she went to her own room.

"You heard nothing of the gentlemen below-stairs?" asked the coroner.

"I may have heard their voices from the hall," said Dorothy carelessly; "but I paid no attention to them, and went directly to my own room."

Leila Duane looked at Dorothy with such a meaning glance that Dorothy realized at once that Leila knew she was telling an untruth. As a matter of fact, Leila had heard Dorothy and Chapin conversing in low tones, and had even heard their steps as they went out to the balcony.

But Leila said nothing either then or when, a few moments later, she herself was called upon to answer questions. She simply repeated Dorothy's story, and corroborated the statement that Dorothy left her (Leila's) room at fifteen or twenty minutes past twelve.

Satisfied that the women could tell him nothing of importance, the Coroner turned to the men.

Mr. Gale and Mr. Crosby having already been questioned, Mr. Chapin was next interviewed.

As confidential secretary, he answered various questions about Justin Arnold's financial affairs and personal habits. Being asked concerning his last interview with Mr. Arnold, he merely said that after the ladies had left them on Monday night, the men went for a short time to the smoking-room. He said that he and Mr. Crane bade Justin Arnold good-night at about half-past twelve, and went at once to their own rooms. He stated that they left Mr. Arnold in the smoking-room, as it was his habit always to stay up after his guests retired.

"And you never saw Mr. Arnold alive again, after leaving him at that time?" inquired the coroner.

"No," replied Chapin, but his voice was low, and he shot a furtive glance at Dorothy, who dropped her own eyes before it.

However, there was no reason to doubt Mr. Chapin's statements, and Mr. Crane, who was called next, corroborated them so far as his own movements were concerned. He deposed that he had said good-night to his host at half-past twelve, and went away with Chapin. Their ways diverged, however, as they were quartered far apart in the big house. Mr. Crane had gone directly to his own room, and had heard nothing strange or unusual through the night.

"Then," said the coroner, by way of summing up, "I am informed that none of the family or guests saw Mr. Arnold after half-past twelve on Monday night. I will, therefore, now put some inquiries to the servants."

"Excuse me," said Emory Gale. "I have no wish to seem intrusive or to put any unnecessary query; but as the late Mr. Arnold's lawyer I claim a right to assist in the investigation of this case. I have waited for Mr. Arnold's secretary to make a statement which he has not made, but which I cannot think he has any objection to making. Mr. Chapin has previously informed me that Mr. Arnold drew a check to his, Chapin's, order for a large amount of money. As this check was drawn after midnight on Monday, it was dated Monday. As I was in Boston that night, I know little of the matter; but I wish to inquire if this check was drawn while the gentlemen were in the smoking-room with Mr. Arnold between twelve and twelve-thirty."

"It was not," quickly volunteered Fred Crane, who never could refrain from giving information. "I was there all that time, and we were telling stories and chatting, and no business matter of any kind was brought up."

There was a dead silence, for everybody saw the implication. If Chapin had received that check after twelve o'clock, and if it had not been drawn while the men were in the smoking-room, then Chapin must have returned for a further interview with Justin Arnold after leaving Crane at twelve-thirty!

"Will you explain this apparent discrepancy in your statements, Mr. Chapin?" asked the coroner coldly, but courteously enough.

"The explanation is," said Chapin sullenly, "that I did go back to speak to Arnold for a moment, and he gave me the check. As it is private business of my own, I cannot see that I need answer further questions concerning it."

"Not concerning the business, Mr. Chapin," said the coroner; "but this would seem to indicate that you are the last person known to have seen Mr. Arnold alive."

Ernest Chapin's entire manner changed. His sullenness turned to wrath. His eyes flashed, and a red spot burned in either cheek as he

almost shouted, "What do you mean by such an implication? Suppose I did see Mr. Arnold again that night! I know nothing of his death or of his murderer!"

"It would be wiser, Mr. Chapin," said Mr. Fiske coldly, "to show less excitement over the statement of your innocence."

## CHAPTER X.

### DISCLOSURES

As a result of his preliminary investigation, Coroner Fiske placed White Birches under police surveillance. No one who had been inside its walls on the night of the murder was allowed to leave it.

Owing to the high wall and the single entrance of the estate, police surveillance was made easy. The presence of two officers at the great gates was sufficient to secure obedience to orders.

Funeral services for Justin Arnold were to be held the next morning, and the formal inquest would be begun Thursday afternoon.

Because of the painful circumstances, there would not be elaborate obsequies, and the mourners at the funeral would comprise only the household and a few personal friends and neighbors.

Wednesday evening was a trying time for everybody. The women were on the verge of nervous breakdown, and the men were taciturn and gloomy.

The matter of Justin Arnold's will was discussed, and though the instrument itself was in the safe of Gale & Crosby's Boston office, the lawyers knew its contents, and these they made known to the rest.

"The will provides," said Emory Gale, "a legacy of one hundred thousand dollars to Miss Wadsworth; fifty thousand dollars to Ernest Chapin; and good-sized bequests to all of the servants, the largest, of course, for those who have been longest in Mr. Arnold's employ."

"I am positive," spoke up Fred Crane, "that the murderer is one of the servants. In fact, it must be. Some one of them knew of the legacy coming to him, and killed his master in order to obtain his money at once."

"I'm sure that is so," said Dorothy eagerly, for she realized only too well that dark thoughts had been directed toward Ernest Chapin, and she welcomed a suggestion that the criminal might be one of the servants.

"To proceed with the terms of the will," went on Emory Gale, "after some further bequests to a few relatives, friends, and charities, the entire residuary estate, including White Birches, is left to Campbell Crosby."

"Of course this is not a surprise to me," said Crosby, speaking gravely, as one who had just incurred a great responsibility, "for Justin

made this will years ago, and as one of his lawyers I of course knew of it. Moreover, as his next of kin, it was quite right that I should inherit the property, at the time the will was made. But since then Justin became engaged to Miss Duncan, and upon their marriage she would have become his heir. Moreover, Justin told me only a short time ago that he proposed making a new will, which should leave all his property to his wife, irrespective of her legal rights thereto. I thought it probable that my cousin had made a personal will or perhaps a memorandum to that effect, which, if it were found, I should consider as binding as a legally attested instrument. So far nothing of the sort has been found, but it may yet come to light. As the one chiefly interested, I should like to suggest that we leave the matter of inheritance unconsidered for the present, paying from the estate such minor legacies as may be deemed advisable."

This speech of Crosby's had a good effect upon them all. It seemed to dispel a little the vague gloom of the atmosphere, and put matters upon a more practical basis. As a matter of fact, though all felt the horror of the crime, no one present felt a poignant sorrow at Arnold's death. He had not been a lovable man, and though Miss Wadsworth had lived peaceably with him, they had few interests in common, and their relations were in no way affectionate.

As the conversation lagged and became desultory, Crosby took Dorothy by the arm and led her out to the South Terrace. He caught up a wrap as they passed through the hall, and deftly flung it round her shoulders, for the evening was chill.

In silence, he led her to the very end of the terrace, and they stood looking at the moon, now slightly on its wane, and partly obscured by passing clouds.

He drew the voluminous silken cape more closely round her, and, still holding its fulness at her throat, he tilted her dainty chin until her eyes looked into his own.

"Dorothy," he said, "darling, I can't wait! You must promise me *now* that you will be mine; that you will marry me, after all these horrible scenes are over. Promise me, darling, and then, if you insist, I will wait patiently for a time. But let me have your dear promise, let me know that there is hope for me——"

"But there is n't any, Campbell;" and Dorothy spoke very seriously, while a troubled look came into her eyes.

"You don't mean that, darling;" and Crosby was very gentle and tender. "You don't mean I may n't *hope*, for I could n't live without that! What you really mean is that you can't think about it now; your dear little heart is so perturbed by these dreadful scenes. I'm a brute even to think you can tell me now what I want to know. But you will, sweetheart, you will! And after a time we will be happy together,

Dorothy. White Birches is mine now, and I care, dear, only because I can offer it to you."

Dorothy moved slightly aside from Crosby's nearness. "Campbell," she said, in a faint little voice, "I've a good mind to confide in you."

"Why should n't you, dearest? Tell me anything you wish. It will be perfectly safe with me."

"Well, Justin knew that Mr. Chapin and I were on the balcony that night. He found us there together. And he was very angry. He sent me to my room, and asked Mr. Chapin to go downstairs with him."

"Oh!" exclaimed Crosby, in a tone of surprise. "I begin to understand."

"But, Campbell—that did n't—that *could n't* have had anything to do with—with what happened to Justin!"

"Dorothy, hush!" and Crosby's voice was tense. "Never breathe such a thing! Now, listen: I don't believe for one minute that Ernest Chapin had anything to do with Justin's death, but I can tell you, dear, that there's going to be a most fearful lot of circumstantial evidence piled up against him. That evidence, Dorothy, you and I will fight!"

"Whether it's true or not?"

"Whether it's true or not."

"Oh, Campbell, even—I hate to say it, but even if Ernest Chapin was—did do wrong, could you get him off? You're a lawyer, you know."

Crosby's face changed. He stepped nearer to Dorothy and grasped her shoulders. "Why do you say that?" he said hoarsely. "Why are you so desperately anxious to have him cleared of suspicion? Dorothy, it can't be that you care for him!"

"That has nothing to do with it," said Dorothy haughtily.

"It has everything to do with it!" And Campbell clasped her almost roughly in his arms. "Tell me—tell me this instant—do you really care for that ordinary, uninteresting fellow, who is not really of your own class?"

"He is n't ordinary and uninteresting! You shan't say such things!"

"Then, you *do* care for him! Why, Dorothy, he's beneath you in every way!"

"Love levels all ranks," said the girl softly.

Crosby looked at her a moment, as if in utter despair. Then his face suddenly changed, and he said exultantly, "I'm not afraid! I know you for a fickle young person, and even though you think for the moment that you're interested in that man, it's partly because you think he's a martyr, and more because you never know your own mind two days in succession! But I'm going to teach you, you beautiful little rogue, you, what it means to be true and constant to one love only. My love for you is so big and desperate that I will *compel* you to love me, and me alone! Do you hear that, my beauty?"

Dorothy was really frightened at Crosby's vehemence, for, though she had received impassioned declarations before, there was something in this man's manner that made her feel his power over her. Under the effect of it, she almost wavered for an instant in her loyalty to Chapin; but Dorothy was beginning to find herself, and her new-born loyalty to the man she really loved was already strong enough to withstand temptation. But she knew instinctively that to declare further her love for Chapin would enrage Crosby, and possibly cause him to withhold whatever influence he might have toward clearing Ernest of any possible suspicion. So she gently forbade Crosby to continue his own pleadings at the present time, and with tender consideration he changed the subject and again became his own debonair, interesting self.

Dorothy had much food for thought that night, and for once the little girl was kept awake by serious reflections about herself and others.

The next morning brought the harrowing hours of the funeral, and in the afternoon began the no less disturbing experiences of the coroner's inquest.

Mr. Fiske had impanelled a coroner's jury of six men, and the proceedings began directly after luncheon was over.

The coroner had his programme mapped out, and his questions were definite and to the point, bringing out the principal facts in logical order. The informal testimony of the day before was repeated under oath, and soon the jury were in possession of all the evidence given by the members of the household.

Dorothy told her story exactly as she had the day before, excusing it to herself by arguing that she had kept back only part of the truth and had not told an actual falsehood.

Ernest Chapin repeated his story, admitting the receipt of a check of five thousand dollars from Arnold, during an interview which took place after half-past twelve o'clock on Monday night.

But he refused to tell the nature of the interview, or the reason for the check, saying that it was a private matter between him and his employer, and had no bearing upon the crime.

Without comment on Mr. Chapin's statements, Mr. Fiske next questioned the servants.

From Driggs, the butler, the jury learned of Mr. Arnold's peculiar precautions against burglars, of his personal habits, and of his doings, so far as Driggs knew, on the night the crime was committed.

"When did you last see your master alive?" inquired the coroner.

"Just before I went to bed, sir, as I passed through the hall, I saw Mr. Arnold in the library, sir."

"Was he alone?"

"No, sir."

"Who was with him?"

"Mr. Chapin, sir."

"Were they apparently angry?"

"They were, sir."

"Very angry?"

"Very angry, sir."

"Did you overhear any words?"

"I'm not given to eavesdropping, sir."

"Did you overhear any words?" the coroner repeated, and his icy glance seemed to fascinate Driggs.

"I did, then, sir. I heard Mr. Arnold say that many a man had killed another for less than that."

"You heard nothing more?"

"Nothing more at all, sir."

"And then you went directly away to your own quarters?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do;" and Driggs's testimony was ended.

Although to coroner and jury the butler's evidence had a certain meaning, yet others present seemed disturbed by varying emotions.

Ernest Chapin's face turned scarlet, and he sat with his eyes cast down, the picture of a troubled, despairing man.

Dorothy looked anxiously thoughtful. She knew that Arnold had seen her in Chapin's embrace, and she had n't the slightest doubt that the words quoted by Driggs referred to that. But surely the quarrel between the two men could not have had such a desperate result as murder, and if it had, the rôles of criminal and victim should have been reversed.

Both Gale and Crosby seemed deeply interested in Driggs's story. Crosby's glance wandered often to Dorothy, and at times his compressed lips showed his own anger at the thought of the girl he loved being the subject of a quarrel between two other men.

As for Fred Crane, he had simply made up his mind that startling developments were imminent, and he scribbled now and then in a notebook as he sat breathlessly waiting further disclosures.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DOROTHY'S DETERMINATION

JANE, a chambermaid, was the next to be questioned. She had the care of certain of the bedrooms, including Mr. Arnold's and Mr. Chapin's. She deposed that when she went to make up Mr. Arnold's room on Tuesday morning, she found that the room had not been used during the night. There was nothing to do but to replace the bed-covering that had been turned down, and arrange the day pillows.

She went next to make up Mr. Chapin's room, and did so, noticing at the time that some trunks and bags were packed, and apparently

waiting to be taken away, while the wardrobe and dresser drawers had been emptied of their usual belongings.

"You received the impression, then," said Mr. Fiske, "that Mr. Chapin had packed up his possessions during the night, with the intention of departure from White Birches?"

"It seemed that way to me, sir," said Jane, casting a troubled glance at Chapin, whose despairing aspect had not changed.

"But you then made up Mr. Chapin's room, as usual?"

"Yes, sir, just as usual."

"And when did you go to that room again?"

"Not until the next morning, sir. Peters looks after Mr. Chapin at night, sir."

"And the next morning were Mr. Chapin's trunks still packed?"

"No, sir; they had been taken away, and everything was put back in its place in the wardrobes and dresser."

"Apparently a change of plan," commented the coroner. "That will do, Jane; you're excused. Mr. Chapin, will you tell us why you packed up your belongings as if to go away?"

Ernest Chapin looked up with an effort. But in a steady, even voice he replied, "I did intend leaving here Tuesday morning, permanently."

"Because of your quarrel with Mr. Arnold?"

"As a result of that, yes."

The jurymen wagged their heads at one another by way of comment on this information.

"Why did you not carry out your intention, Mr. Chapin?"

"I learned Tuesday morning that Justin Arnold was missing, and I decided to stay until the mystery of his disappearance should be cleared up. As a matter of fact, Mr. Arnold and I severed our business relations during the interview I had with him."

"You mean, he discharged you from the post of secretary?"

"I mean exactly that." Chapin's voice had now assumed the dead tone of a man who has nothing more to hope for. Though his words were plausible, though his eyes were steady and frank, his voice and manner showed extreme dejection and a sort of final despair.

Without further consideration of Chapin's statements, Mr. Fiske called Peters, the valet. His evidence was the same as he had given before, with the exception of an added bit of information which seemed, to all the hearers, of decided importance.

Peters stated, though with some reluctance, and after some prodding by the coroner, that Mr. Chapin had asked him to unpack the trunks and bags, and put away his belongings in their accustomed places. Moreover, Mr. Chapin had given him a goodish bit of money, and a hint not to mention the packing or the unpacking of the boxes.

"In a word," said the coroner, "Mr. Chapin bribed you to keep secret the facts that he had concluded to go away suddenly and had afterward changed his mind."

"If you put it that way, sir," agreed Peters.

"Have you any explanation to offer, Mr. Chapin, of these somewhat curious proceedings?" inquired the coroner.

But the worm had turned. Ernest Chapin sat bolt upright, his attitude became one of haughty indifference, and he said curtly, "I never make explanations concerning any fees I may choose to give servants."

"Then, let me ask you in a friendly way, Chapin," the coroner went on, in a somewhat gentler voice, "to give us any explanations that you will. For I may tell you frankly that what has been said here this morning seems to indicate that explanations must be required of you. It will be far wiser for you to volunteer them now than to be forced to give them later."

"I have none to give," said Chapin coldly. "I had no hand in the murder of Justin Arnold. I know nothing whatever about it. I had an unpleasant interview with him late Monday night, and when we parted, although we did so courteously, we were not good friends. But I did not kill him, nor have I the slightest idea who did."

The words were frank, the manner was sincere, and yet very few of those present believed Chapin's declaration. It was quite evident what the coroner thought, although he said nothing of his own opinion. But he rapidly summed up the case and gave it to the jury.

The jurymen left the room, and in a short time returned with the verdict that in their opinion Ernest Chapin was guilty of the murder of Justin Arnold.

There was an instant of quietness, and then there was almost a hubbub in the room. Several spoke at once, and the coroner was obliged to enforce order by rapping on the table.

As soon as quiet was restored, Dorothy spoke, and spoke rapidly and to the point.

"Mr. Coroner," she said, "have I a right to be heard?"

"Certainly, Miss Duncan, if you have any information to give concerning the case."

"I have;" and by the very quietness and dignity of her manner Dorothy commanded the attention of the rest. "I want to tell you of an incident that may influence your decision. I did not tell quite all the truth when I was questioned, but I will tell it now. When I left Miss Duane's room on Monday night, I did not go directly to my own room, but, meeting Mr. Chapin in the hall, I went with him out on the balcony for a few moments. Mr. Arnold came upstairs, and chanced to see us there together. He was exceedingly angry, and sent me to my

room. He then asked Mr. Chapin to go downstairs again with him, and he did so. The quarrel that ensued was about me, and I think it right to tell you this, for Mr. Chapin has refused to tell it simply for the sake of shielding me, and I wish to relieve him of that necessity for secrecy."

The coroner looked thoughtful. "This, then, Mr. Chapin, was the cause of your quarrel with your employer, and the reason for his discharging you?"

"It was," returned Chapin frankly. "Since Miss Duncan has told you of the episode, I have no further reason to deny it. Mr. Arnold spoke to me in such a manner as might be expected of a jealous man. He was both just and generous, in the fact that he gave me a check for five thousand dollars in lieu of notice, and requested that I should leave White Birches at once. That is why I packed up on my return to my room. The next day, in view of his unaccountable disappearance, I deemed it best to stay here, in hope of being of some assistance."

The coroner looked but slightly impressed by these further disclosures, and said, "You say Mr. Arnold was both just and generous in his payment to you. Was he equally so in conversation?"

Chapin's face flushed. "He was not," he said. "On the contrary, he was both unjust and ungenerous in his words to me; but since he is not here to defend himself, I prefer to make no complaint of his attitude."

"Was not five thousand dollars a large sum to give you instead of the usual month's notice?"

Again Chapin flushed painfully. It seemed as if he were continually making ignominious admissions. "The reason for so large a parting gift was because Mr. Arnold further informed me that he should erase from his will a bequest he had made to me."

"Oh, then, Mr. Arnold intended to cut you out of his will?"

"So he told me."

"But since he fortuitously died before he could carry out that intention, his bequest to you still stands in your name!"

"Oh, I say, that's too bad!" exclaimed Campbell Crosby, who was watching Chapin writhe under the scathing irony of the coroner.

"Thank you, Crosby," said Chapin, nodding at the young man gratefully; for it was the only hint of comradeship that had been given him during his ordeal.

"I cannot see, Mr. Chapin," said the coroner curtly, "that what Miss Duncan has told us, or what you have told us yourself, has any favorable bearing on the matter. Indeed, to my mind, you have simply added a plausible, if despicable, motive for wishing to be rid of Justin Arnold, before he should have opportunity to cut off your inheritance."

Chapin simply looked at the man. He seemed to understand that words were useless, and he merely shrugged his shoulders and sat still.

What happened just after that, Dorothy Duncan never quite knew. She knew that some dreadful officers took Ernest Chapin away, and she knew that they called it being arrested, but that it meant going to jail. And then she fainted in her mother's arms, and for a time had the bliss of utter unconsciousness.

But with her returning senses came a realization of it all, and a mad, wild determination to conquer circumstances, to refute evidence, and to save Chapin yet. How this was to be accomplished, she had no idea, but never yet had Dorothy Duncan failed in an undertaking! To be sure, she had never undertaken such a task as this, but, on the other hand, she had never before felt the same power of strength and capability of endeavor. From a merry butterfly of a girl, she had suddenly bloomed into a single-hearted, loving woman, and she would save her lover from his impending fate if a woman's will or a woman's wiles could do it!

Alone, in her own room, she came to these decisions, and went at once in search of definite advice.

On the terrace she found Mr. Gale and Mr. Crosby.

"I want you to help me," she said simply, "both of you. In the first place, Ernest never killed Justin. I *know* he did n't, but I can't prove it to that horrid coroner man. Nor to that detective, either! He had a spite against Ernest from the very beginning."

"But, Miss Duncan," began Gale, "you must admit——"

"I admit nothing! I know what you're going to say—'circumstantial evidence,' and all that tomfoolery! I don't care for your opinion, Mr. Gale—pardon me if I am rude, but I mean exactly what I say! I'm not asking your opinion as to who killed Justin, for you don't know, and a mere opinion is worth nothing. What I ask you is this: can you direct me to the very best detective in the country? I don't mean what they call a central-office man; I mean a detective who can detect mysteries."

"Dorothy," said Crosby, looking at her closely, "don't talk like that; you are excited, child. You can do nothing in this matter. It is not work for a young girl."

"I'm a woman," said Dorothy, "and I demand consideration of what I have to say. You said yourself, Campbell, that you did n't believe Ernest committed the crime; now what are you going to do to find out who did do it, and save an innocent man?"

"There's Stone, of course," said Gale thoughtfully. "He's the only one, Dorothy, that I know of who can do miracles in detective work."

"Stone!" exclaimed Crosby. "Fleming Stone? For Heaven's sake, don't get him!"

"Why not?" said Gale.

"In the first place, he never takes any but the most important cases;

again, he's outrageously expensive; and, any way, his services are so difficult to procure as to be practically impossible."

Dorothy looked at the speaker gravely. "Campbell, this is an important case. I'm sorry Mr. Stone's expensive, but I should think, as Justin's heir, you would be glad to spend your money toward the rightful avenging of his death! As to your third objection, that Mr. Stone's services are hard to obtain, I myself will engage to secure him for our case."

Gale looked in amazed admiration at this new Dorothy who had so suddenly come into being. Her beauty seemed intensified by the woman's soul that looked out of her eyes.

"By Jove! you're right!" exclaimed Gale. "Though I hate to believe it of Chapin, somehow I can't see any loophole for the man. And, Miss Duncan, if you want to appeal to the very highest possible talent in the detective line, go to Fleming Stone, and I'll warrant you'll persuade him to do your bidding. Shall I telephone him for you, and make an appointment at his place in New York? You never could see him any other way."

"Oh, do, please, Mr. Gale! I will keep any appointment he may make. Mother will go with me at any time to see him."

Gale went away on this errand, and Crosby turned suddenly to Dorothy, saying impulsively, "Don't let him do that, Dorothy! Run after him, and ask him not to telephone!"

"Why?" and Dorothy turned her large, sad eyes full on Crosby. "If you don't want to spend so much money, I will manage that part of it myself. Mother has some, and I have a little of my own."

"Don't talk like that, dearest! You *know* all that I have is yours, if you will accept it! Dorothy, will you promise to marry me if I will free Ernest Chapin from all suspicion of this crime?"

"Can you do that?"

"If I take the case, I can do it. I'd be a poor lawyer otherwise. But never mind that; will you promise to be mine if I succeed in setting Chapin free?"

Dorothy looked at him curiously. "If you can set him free, you must know something that you have n't yet told."

"Lawyers know lots of things they don't tell," said Crosby, almost flippantly; "but you have n't promised yet."

"Campbell," and Dorothy's piquant face was very sweet and serious as she spoke, "you may as well understand, once for all, that when Ernest Chapin is free, I shall marry him, and nobody else."

"Then, I wash my hands of the whole affair," said Crosby angrily; "and a good time you and your precious Fleming Stone will have, trying to clear your lover! After you have failed, you may be glad to reconsider my offer."

"I may," said Dorothy, very gravely. "If Fleming Stone should fail, and if I were positive that you could free Ernest, I would consent to marry you—if you would not otherwise help him. But, Campbell Crosby, I would never marry you for any reason *except* to save Ernest Chapin's life!"

Dorothy turned and left him to such cold comfort as he might get from her parting speech. Going into the house, she met Gale, who told her he had arranged for her to call on Mr. Stone in New York the next morning, at ten o'clock.

"I am very glad, Miss Duncan," he said, "that you have taken this step. Miss Duane and I have discussed the matter, and, though I frankly confess that things look very black for Chapin, we have felt that he should have the benefit of even a desire for doubt. And I assure you if Fleming Stone cannot find the criminal, no one can."

Dorothy remembered Campbell Crosby's offer to free Chapin himself, and concluded he meant to do it by legal chicanery; or else he merely made the rash promise in the hope of persuading her to marry him.

In one of the swift motor-cars belonging to the garage of White Birches, Dorothy and her mother started the next morning to see Mr. Stone. Leila had begged to go, too, saying that she would not ask to be present at the interview, but she wanted to see, at least, the reception-room of the great detective. Of course, Leila's going implied Gale's going also. So the four started off.

As in Gale's opinion it augured better success, Dorothy went into Mr. Stone's presence alone, leaving the others in the reception-room.

"Miss Duncan?" said Stone, glancing from the card to Dorothy. "What can I do for you?"

A week earlier Dorothy would have brought into play her whole bewitching paraphernalia of smiles, blushes, dimples, and long, drooping eyelashes. Now those wiles seemed to her trivial in the face of her great tragedy, and, dropping into the seat Mr. Stone placed for her, she looked straight in his face and said slowly, "You can do this for me, Mr. Stone. The man I hope to marry has been arrested for a murder he did not commit. But everybody believes he did it. Even the lawyers say there is no loophole for him."

"And you want me to find a loophole?" said Fleming Stone, smiling kindly at her as she paused.

"Oh, Mr. Stone, how good you are!" she cried, referring to his kindly tone and reassuring smile. "No, I don't want you to find a loophole. I want you to find the man who did kill Mr. Arnold."

"And this man under arrest, your friend, is judged guilty, I suppose, because of circumstantial evidence so strong that it convinces everybody."

"Yes; but I know he did n't do it."

"And you have only that knowledge, as you term it, born of your affection for him, with which to refute this overwhelming tide of evidence?"

If Dorothy had faltered then, had hesitated, or had suddenly realized that her case was weak, she might not have roused Fleming Stone's interest. But she said simply, "Yes, Mr. Stone, that is all; but it is enough, for my knowledge is true, and the evidence is false—or not false, perhaps, but misleading."

"Give me a slight outline of the circumstances," said Fleming Stone, and, with a sigh of resignation, he pushed away the papers he had been working on and settled himself to listen.

Straightforwardly Dorothy told the story. She omitted no important detail, she did not gloss over the points that told against Chapin, and she made no effort to cajole Fleming Stone's sympathy by any exhibition of sentiment or pathos.

He listened attentively, thought a few moments after she had finished, and then said:

"As part of our problem, then, we have first a house-party in a house that it is impossible to leave or enter during the night. We have a man who is in love with Mr. Arnold's fiancée. We have this man the last person to see Mr. Arnold at night, when they engage in angry altercation. We find Mr. Arnold dead the next morning. We know of no one else who could have had any motive or opportunity for the crime, and yet we are asked to prove that this man in question did not do it."

Dorothy's heart fell like lead. The way in which Mr. Stone set forth this sequence of arguments seemed to point so indubitably to Chapin—or, at least, seemed to prove that Mr. Stone thought they did—that Dorothy lost all hope of his assistance.

But she said bravely, though in a faint voice, "Yes, that's what we have to prove."

"Plucky little piece," was Fleming Stone's inward comment, but aloud he said, "Then, Miss Duncan, if that's what we have to prove, the sooner we set about it the better."

"Can you prove it, Mr. Stone?" and hope, suddenly roused by his words, sent the color flying to Dorothy's cheeks, the light to her eyes, and a tremulous smile to the corners of her mouth.

Being merely human, after all, Fleming Stone caught his breath at this sudden vision of animated beauty, but he answered her query by saying, "You think Mr. Chapin innocent, Miss Duncan?"

"I know him to be innocent, Mr. Stone."

"Then, you will not be so greatly surprised when I say I agree with you."

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE INTERVIEW

DOROTHY gave a rapturous, almost inarticulate gasp, and, jumping up, impulsively held out two little roseleaf hands that were as impulsively clasped by Fleming Stone.

"You dear man!" she breathed, and the glory in her eyes seemed to dart far beyond the enclosing walls of the room, penetrating, Stone felt sure, even to the cell where her lover sat.

Unconscious, in her joy, of having acted unconventionally, Dorothy resumed her seat, and Fleming Stone took up the conversation.

"Was the weapon found?" he asked brusksly, as if beginning a list of questions.

"No," said Dorothy thoughtfully. "Nobody seemed to think of that. He was stabbed, you know."

"That presupposes a knife or dagger, then. Is it not strange that no one queried what became of that knife or dagger?"

"It is strange," said Dorothy; "and if I had the least fear that Ernest were guilty, I should be afraid to have his room searched. But I have no such fear, and, Mr. Stone, might not a careful search reveal that dagger, and thus give a clue in the right direction?"

"But the house was pretty thoroughly searched, you tell me, and so I can scarcely think that the weapon is hidden in any place where it may be easily found. The strongest argument against your faith in Mr. Chapin is his speech, of which you told me yourself: that he said he did n't care what had become of Mr. Arnold, and that he would be willing to commit crime to win you."

Dorothy hesitated a moment, then she blushed a rosy red, and, as if with sudden determination, she said, "But, Mr. Stone, Mr. Crosby said that, too. He said he did n't care what had become of Justin if it left me free to marry him. I know these are awfully conceited things for a girl to tell, but I'm only trying to show you that a man does n't always mean the desperate things he says."

"Miss Duncan," said Stone, "I may as well confess I brought up that point to see if you would not answer it in some such manner as you did. I feel sure you have had a wide and varied circle of admirers, and I know you have learned not to take all their remarks too literally. I'm making this point because I want you to understand that I do not really consider that speech of Mr. Chapin's as evidence against him. On the contrary, if a man has murder in his heart, he's most careful, usually, not to let such a thing creep into his speech. Now, another point, the fact that Mr. Chapin packed up his clothing at night, after being discharged by his employer, and unpacked it again the next day, is to my mind distinctly in his favor. Whatever was his condition of mind when

he packed his boxes after his angry interview with Mr. Arnold, it was changed when he learned that Mr. Arnold had disappeared. Had he been the cause of that disappearance, he would not have been surprised at the information, and would have had no reason to change his plans accordingly."

"That is true!" cried Dorothy excitedly. "That horrid coroner was bound to suspect Ernest, and he made every bit of evidence seem to be against him, whether it was or not."

"It is a common mistake to theorize, and then insist on fitting the facts to one's theory. Miss Duncan, I cannot promise you success, but I can promise you my best endeavors to fasten this crime where it rightfully belongs, and I do not think now that the criminal's name is Chapin."

"Who do you think did it?" asked Dorothy quickly.

"I have n't an idea, though I have the least little, tiny glimmering of a direction in which to look. Further than that, I cannot say, until I can go to White Birches and examine the scene of the crime."

"But it is too late to find clues! To-day is Friday—that's four days since—since it happened."

"Some clues are ineffaceable," said Stone gravely. "A living clue is not lost sight of in four days."

Suddenly Dorothy felt enveloped in the mystery of this man's genius. He knew nothing of the case save what she had told him. She had told him nothing of the case save what had been heard by the jury who had convicted Chapin; and yet here was this man implying that he considered Ernest innocent, and talking about living clues, as if he already had the criminal in mind!

"When will you come, Mr. Stone?"

"I am exceedingly busy, Miss Duncan, but I'm going to take time for this matter. I will go to White Birches to-morrow morning, and remain there, if necessary, over the week-end."

"And"—Dorothy hesitated, and stammered a little—"but—they tell me you are very expensive, Mr. Stone."

"Much depends on circumstances, Miss Duncan. If Mr. Chapin is freed, perhaps he will pay my not exorbitant fee out of his legacy."

Dorothy looked pained for a moment, and then she realized that if Ernest were freed, and the real criminal discovered, there could be no stigma attached to the bequest of Arnold.

After the briefest of good-byes, Mr. Stone held the door open for her, and closed it immediately after her, so that Leila caught not even a glimpse of the celebrated detective.

"But you will see him, Leila, you will!" exclaimed Dorothy, as she threw her arm around her mother's neck, in her gladness. "Oh, Mother, he's coming to-morrow, and he knows Ernest did n't kill Justin,

and he's going to find out who did—though I think he knows that, too, already!"

"By Jove, Dorothy, you're a wonder!" exclaimed Emory Gale. "You must have hypnotized him to think just what you wanted him to! I did n't think he was that sort of man!"

"He is n't that sort of man," said Dorothy, smiling happily. "He just thinks his own thoughts, but he thinks Ernest is innocent, and he's going to make everybody else think so, too."

## CHAPTER XII.

### FLEMING STONE'S INVESTIGATION

FLEMING STONE arrived Saturday morning. His winning personality appealed to them all, and though Leila was surprised that the great detective should have the polished manner of the men of her own world, she, with the others, fell under the thrall of his personal magnetism.

Mr. Stone did not desire the household to come together, so that he might ask them questions officially. Instead, he wandered about the house and grounds, conversing casually with the different ones, and seemingly going about at random.

In fact, Emory Gale began to think that the man's powers had been overrated, and that he was floundering, because he knew not in which direction to look. Fred Crane was secretly disgusted at the detective's methods; but Miss Abby Wadsworth sniffed openly, and said to Mrs. Duncan that for her part she thought Mr. Wheeler had twice the brains of Mr. Stone.

The detective whom she thus flattered, however, was of quite another mind. James Wheeler, who had begged to be present, appreciated what Fleming Stone was doing. He followed the great man about, furtively watching every expression of his face and every direction of his eyes. He listened to Mr. Stone's remarks—noting the vital questions veiled by casual effects—and almost held his breath as he endeavored to trace the workings of the subtle mind.

After not more than an hour at White Birches, Mr. Stone went away for an interview with Ernest Chapin. At her earnest request, Dorothy was allowed to accompany him.

As they returned, in the big motor-car, and Dorothy looked at him appealingly, he replied at once to her unspoken question.

"Your faith is not misplaced, my dear child. Mr. Chapin is innocent of the crime; and though he must remain where he is until the criminal is discovered, it is fortunate that he has the knowledge of your love and loyalty to cheer him. Moreover, he may yet owe his very life to your insistence on his innocence; for I have never seen a more convincing pile of circumstantial evidence against an innocent man."

"But how are you going to find the culprit, Mr. Stone?"

"There *seems* to be no direction in which to look. There *are*, in fact, very few directions in which to look; but I'm sure you can understand that the very limitations of the outlook must mean quick work."

Dorothy did n't quite understand this, but as Mr. Stone became silent and seemed lost in thought, she said nothing further to him.

Once again at White Birches, Mr. Stone went systematically to work. He asked for a footman to lead him to such portions of the house as he wished to visit. But it was all done so quietly and unostentatiously that most of the household returned to their own interests and paid no attention to the wanderings of erratic genius.

Mr. Wheeler followed close in the footsteps of Fleming Stone, while Dorothy hovered in the background, eagerly awaiting some development that she might understand.

Stone went at once to the roofs, and glanced about at the trap-doors and scuttles in much the way Wheeler had done before him, thereby causing the heart of the lesser detective to swell with pride.

When Stone opened the scuttle that led to the small dark attic in the old ell, Mr. Wheeler remarked, "There's no use looking in there, Mr. Stone. That little loft has no outlet into the house. Its only door has been nailed up for years."

"Thank you," said Fleming Stone, who had already half disappeared through the scuttle. He went on down and remained in the attic for several minutes, and, after returning to the roof, reentered the house by the trap-door through which they had come up.

Stone's manner had changed somewhat. Though not discourteous in any way, he was so absorbed in his own thoughts as to seem oblivious to all about him. Descending from one story to another, he paused at certain rooms and looked in. It was an old part of the house, occupied mostly by the servants.

He next asked to speak with Jane and Peters, whose bedrooms he had noticed especially.

"You remember the night your master disappeared?" he asked abruptly of the two servants.

"Yes, sir," they replied.

"Did you hear any noise at all during the night?"

"No, sir."

"Not any noise at all? No usual noises?"

"Well, sir," said Jane, "there was the rats in the wall, sir."

"And most uncommon bad they was that night, sir," added Peters reminiscently.

"Ah!" and Fleming Stone seemed deeply interested in the information. "And do you often hear rats in the wall?"

"Now and again, sir; but that night they was worse than usual."

This is a very old part of the house, sir, and we can't seem to get altogether rid of them."

"That will do."

Mr. Wheeler noticed the gleam in Fleming Stone's eye, and felt sure that however inexplicable it might be, the rats in the wall had to do with the mystery of White Birches!

Next Fleming Stone went straight to the cellar, with the footman leading the way, and the faithful Wheeler and the eager Dorothy following.

Stone carefully examined the old oven and the various small rooms in that part of the cellar. An old work-bench stood against a white-washed brick wall. This he pulled away, disclosing a large opening, or chimney flue. Though thick with dust and dirt and cobwebs, Mr. Stone peered into it, and, stooping, picked up a pocket-knife, which he pocketed without a glance. With a stick, he poked around in the accumulated rubbish, and gave a sudden exclamation as he picked up a small white marble. He gazed at it a moment with intense concentration, and then, turning, he offered it to Dorothy.

"There's the clue," he said exultantly.

"What is it?" inquired the girl, as she took the marble, wonderingly.

"It is a white alley."

"What is it for?"

"It was made for boys to play with; but its present use is to clear your lover from the unjust charge hanging over him. His is a narrow chance, but he will yet make it. You'd better preserve that white alley, for the time will come when you will realize its importance."

Though she fought against the conviction, Dorothy could n't help an impression that Fleming Stone was crazy. But James Wheeler stood as one enthralled. Here was detective work such as he had dreamed of but never accomplished! To pick up a common marble, a boy's marble, of the type called an alley, and by its aid to discover the man who killed Justin Arnold—this was wonderful work indeed! Not spectacular—Fleming Stone could not be that—but an exhibition of the deduction made by genius from logical observation and inference.

"How did it get there?" inquired Dorothy, for lack of a more intelligent question to ask.

"It has probably been there for twenty years," replied Stone carelessly, and with this unilluminating speech he turned and went upstairs.

Mr. Stone seemed to look upon Miss Wadsworth as the head of the somewhat disintegrated household, and he at once sought her presence.

"I have to go away now," he said to her. "I have done all that can be accomplished here at present."

"But you have been here barely three hours, Mr. Stone."

"Much may be done in a short time if that time be not wasted. I

must go now, but I will return Monday morning, and I expect then to give you the result of my inquiries into this case."

"Will you not stay to luncheon?" Miss Abby spoke coldly, for she did not believe Mr. Stone had accomplished anything, and thought he only wanted to get away.

"No, thank you. If you will send me back to New York in the motor, I shall be glad to go at once."

Though they did not know it, the very fact that Fleming Stone's manner was a shade less affable than usual was really a tribute to the fact that he was deeply engrossed in the case.

Only to Dorothy did he smile, when he bade her good-by, and said kindly, "Keep up a good heart, little girl. It will all come out right for you and your lover, but the disclosure of the truth will be a sad event for all."

"Well, for a story-book detective, he's the right sort," said Campbell Crosby, with a supercilious laugh; "but they don't amount to much when it comes to solving a real mystery."

"I think he will solve it," said Dorothy; "and he's coming back Monday to tell us."

"Where is he going in the meantime, Dorothy?" said Crosby. "You seem to be in his confidence more than the rest of us."

"I don't know, Campbell; but I don't think it has anything to do with this case. He's an awfully busy man, and I think he has put us off until Monday so he can attend to something else."

"I don't think so," volunteered Mr. Wheeler. "I think he's pretty much interested in this case, and I think that, wherever he's going, it is on business connected with it."

"I don't," said Miss Abby disdainfully. "I think he's gone off somewhere to a week-end party; and I doubt if we ever see him again!"

But Miss Wadsworth was wrong, for on Monday morning Fleming Stone reappeared. He was courteous and charming, but exceedingly grave.

He asked the members of the household and the guests to assemble in the library, but he advised that the servants be excluded.

"I have discovered," Mr. Stone began, "to my own satisfaction, the assassin of Justin Arnold. But I will tell you the reasons I have for my opinion, and you may conclude for yourselves if I am right. As you know, a seemingly inexplicable problem confronted us. It appeared that the man who killed Justin Arnold could not have gained entrance to White Birches that night. This was based on the assumption that no entrances were known except the ordinary ones. A search was

made to find such an entrance, but it was stopped too soon. Such an entrance exists, and was used. Another direction in which to look is the old principle of seeking him whom the crime will benefit; this too was also done to a degree, but again the search stopped too soon. Let us reconstruct the situation. Mr. Arnold is left alone in his library, late at night. His secretary, the last person to talk with him, left him at one o'clock. By, let us say, half-past one or soon thereafter, the entire household was asleep, save Mr. Arnold. We may assume this since he apparently did not go to his bedroom at all. Let us, then, picture an intruder, who enters the house, goes directly to Mr. Arnold in the library, and, after we know not what sort of an interview, stabs him, prevents incriminating evidence of his deed by the use of a pillow hastily snatched from a nearby couch, and then carries the dead body of his friend to the cellar."

"Why do you say friend, Mr. Stone?" asked Mr. Wheeler, who had been listening intently.

"Had it been other than a friend, Mr. Arnold would have raised an outcry. I said an intruder, but I did not say a marauder. It must have been a man whose unexpected appearance may have surprised but did not alarm Mr. Arnold."

"And how did this intruder effect his entrance?" inquired Campbell Crosby, thus voicing the question in everybody's mind.

"By means of the secret entrance of which I spoke."

"There is no sliding panel or secret stairway in this house," declared Crosby, in tones of certainty.

"Not a secret passage of the sort built in old castles," said Fleming Stone quietly, "but, none the less, a secret mode of entrance, unused for years and almost undiscoverable. Suppose I tell you how I found it. It was through the process of elimination. Your really thorough search for such a means of entrance, I found, omitted only one thing; and that was an exploration of the attic over the old ell. I believe you looked down through the scuttle, but did not go in. Clearly, it was the only place left to search, so I searched it. I found foot-prints in the dust on the old floor, which, though of no especial use for identification, proved that some one had been there recently. As you said, there is no outlet from that attic into the house, the door being nailed up. But as I stood there, looking about by the light of my pocket electric, I noticed, besides the dry garret smell, the characteristic damp odor of the cellar. I found it came up back of the chimney. Investigation proved that the chimney, probably as a precaution against fire, had been built more than a foot away from the external wall of the house. This space or shaft, I concluded, must descend unimpeded to the cellar, to account for that dampness and odor. As a test, I dropped my pocket knife in it and heard it strike down below. I then turned to the roof,

and traced the direction of the shaft down through each story. On reaching the cellar, I found, as I had expected, that this vacant space behind the brick chimney extended directly from cellar to attic. I found, moreover, that on either side of it were large nails driven zigzag into the old wooden joists, by means of which an agile person could climb up if he desired. I picked up my pocket knife—which had proved the directness of the shaft—and, poking about in the rubbish, I found a white alley. This seemed to me to prove my theory that at some time, years ago, boys used to hide here during their play in the old cellar. I had now found how the intruder could get in and out of the house—if he knew of this shaft. Which knowledge, by the way, would imply that he was one of the boys who used to play in this cellar. By inquiring of the servants, I learned that they heard, or thought they heard, unusually loud noises that night, made by the rats in the walls. These unusual noises I take to be due to the entrance and exit of the intruder, through the shaft behind the chimney, by means of the long nails protruding from the joists—in exactly the same fashion as when he was a boy.”

There was intense silence in the room. No one looked at any one else, each seemingly unwilling to breathe the first suggestion of suspicion.

But James Wheeler, absorbed in the technical work of the detective, said breathlessly, “But how did the intruder get up to the roof of the house, to enter at this scuttle? And, before that, how did he get over the wall into the grounds?”

“Remember, Mr. Wheeler, that if my theory is the right one, this intruder, when a boy, playing with marbles, must have been familiar with every inch of the house and grounds. Moreover, if he made his entrance and exit by that shaft of which I have told you, it presupposes a man—for that boy must now be a man—of unusual ingenuity, agility, athletic strength, and daring. I cannot tell you all the details of his entrance from the outer world, but I can give you enough of them to support my claims to plausibility. To begin, the intruder arrived outside the wall, let us say, not long after one o’clock. He brought with him, by way of paraphernalia, a slight rope-ladder, made of fine, strong fish-line. Also a ball of fine fish-line and a weight, very likely a fish-line sinker. Outside the wall, but near it, there is a tree whose spreading branches should have been trimmed away by people as cautious as the Arnold family. But I understand that their excessive precaution is largely tradition, and so this tree has been allowed to grow until it offers a fine point of vantage for one who wishes to note the movements of the watchman, Malony. Our intruder, let us say, climbed this tree and awaited such a time as the watchman should be at his most distant point. Then, still from the branches of the tree, he throws down a piece of rope-ladder or knotted rope inside the wall at the top, hooking it

over the sharp points of broken glass and mortar. He then calmly places a board on these otherwise impassable points—I know this because I have since examined the board—and climbs down his rope-ladder or knotted rope inside the wall. This contrivance he leaves on the wall, as there is no fear of its detection in the darkness. He goes to the house and unrolls a much longer rope-ladder of the same sort. To this is attached his ball of fish-line and sinker. With a good aim he throws the sinker over the low ell of the house. Going around the house and picking up the sinker, he proceeds to pull the line up over the ridge-pole till the ladder reaches the roof, and then fastens his line to a veranda pillar."

"Do you *know* he did this?" asked Campbell Crosby quietly.

"I *know* he did this," returned Fleming Stone, as quietly, "because I found the mark in the turf where the weight struck it; I found a very little fresh dirt near the veranda post; and I also found an end of the fish-line left in the carving of the pillar, where it had hastily been cut off short. On the other side of the house I found many scratches on the painted clapboards, where the intruder had climbed his ladder, up the side of the house.

"To resume, after climbing his ladder to the roof, he goes in through the scuttle, down through the shaft, and up the cellar-stairs, to Justin Arnold's library. After accomplishing his premeditated and fiendish purpose, he disposes of the body of his friend, climbs the shaft, and retraces his steps to the wall and over it. As his ingenious rope-ladders, or whatever he may have used, have not been found, we may conclude he carried them away with him; as, incidentally, he also carried away the weapon which he used; but the board that assisted him over the wall, he was thoughtless enough to toss into some high grass near by, and that has been found."

"You looked for it?" exclaimed Mr. Wheeler, with staring eyes.

"I instructed a gardener to look for it, and he found it. I have nothing more to add, as I think it unnecessary to say the name of the one who benefits most in a mercenary way by this crime; the one who has been familiar with this whole place from boyhood; and the one who is athletic, of strong, wiry build, and possessed of the cool daring and ingenuity required to carry out such an enterprise."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONFESSION

THOUGH Campbell Crosby's face was white and set, it was with rage, not fear.

"How dare you!" he exclaimed, as he fairly glared at Fleming Stone. "It is impossible to ignore the fact that your dastardly accusa-

rions are directed toward me! And I would deny them, but for the fact that they are so ridiculously absurd as to need no denial! I am disinclined even to take up the subject with you. But I *will* tell you, what every one else present knows, that my connection with this case in any way is an utter impossibility! The night it occurred I was in Boston. I left White Birches at noon the day before my cousin disappeared, and I returned in the evening of the day after he disappeared."

"And you can give an account of yourself, Mr. Crosby, during that interval of absence?" Fleming Stone's eyes had lost all their softness now. They gleamed with stern justice as he looked at Campbell Crosby, and they glittered ominously as Crosby replied:

"Every moment of it! My partner, Mr. Gale, is present and he will vouch for the truth of my statements. Though the audacity of your accusation makes me wish to treat it with the silent contempt it deserves!"

Emory Gale looked bewildered. "I cannot understand it at all, Mr. Stone," he said. "Mr. Crosby was in my company almost continuously from the time we left White Birches until we returned here together."

"Almost continuously, Mr. Gale," repeated Fleming Stone gravely. "What were the hours that Mr. Crosby was not in your company?"

"Why, let me see. Only during the night, I think. We reached Boston about six, dined separately, and were to meet later, but Crosby concluded to go to a concert, so I did n't see him again until he came to the office next morning at the usual time."

"Then you saw him, let us say, at six o'clock Monday night, and next at ten o'clock Tuesday morning?"

"Approximately that."

"And between those hours, Mr. Gale, Mr. Crosby returned to White Birches, accomplished what he came for, and went back again to Boston, in time to reach the office as usual."

"You lie!" exclaimed Campbell Crosby, springing from his seat.

"No, I speak the truth, Mr. Crosby, and I must ask you to discuss the matter more quietly."

"But, Mr. Stone," went on Emory Gale, looking puzzled, "there must be a mistake somewhere, for Cam telephoned me two or three times Monday evening; the last time just as I was retiring, at about eleven o'clock. It would be a physical impossibility for him to make the trip from Boston to New York, visit White Birches, and get back again to Boston between eleven at night and eight in the morning."

"Yes, that's what it would be, a physical impossibility!" agreed Mr. Wheeler, counting the hours on his fingers.

"Mr. Crosby did not accomplish a physical impossibility," said Fleming Stone. "Where was he when he telephoned you at eleven o'clock, Mr. Gale?"

"At his hotel—the Lorraine."

"How do you know he was there?"

"He said so."

"Ah, he was not quite truthful. As a matter of fact, he telephoned you at eleven o'clock on Monday night from New Haven, Connecticut."

"All of this is exceedingly ingenious," said Campbell Crosby, in a sneering voice, "but it really does not affect me. I did not spend the night with Gale, but I can prove, if necessary, by the employees at my hotel, that I spent the night at the Lorraine."

Fleming Stone gave to Campbell Crosby what was unmistakably a glance of admiration.

"You have a most wonderful appreciation of details, Mr. Crosby," he said. "I confess you very nearly hoodwinked me with your cleverness. I spent yesterday in Boston, much of the time at the Lorraine, endeavoring to learn whether you really spent Monday night there or not, and I find you did not. But when I interviewed the chambermaid she told me that she found your room quite as usual Tuesday morning. The bed-clothing tossed in a heap, your night things about, and wet towels in the bath-room. As you left the Lorraine before eight o'clock Monday evening, it was certainly clever so to arrange your rooms that the chambermaid would be willing to testify that you had occupied them Monday night. The minor detail of towels sufficiently wet to remain damp overnight excites my passing admiration, and proves, too, that your premeditations for this crime have been long and careful."

Perhaps not so much because of what Fleming Stone said, as because of the calm certainty with which he said it, Campbell Crosby gave up.

"You have beaten me," he said to Mr. Stone. "I did concoct and carry out a plan exactly as you have described it. But I am too clever not to realize when I am cornered. My dear friends"—and Crosby glanced round the room—"Mr. Fleming Stone is right. I could supply to his story a few missing details concerning the weapon used and the disposition of that and the other paraphernalia. I could even give a somewhat amusing account of my lightning changes from local to express trains, and of certain annoying delays in getting long-distance telephone connection from New Haven and elsewhere. There were artistic touches, too, about my careful prearrangements at the hotel. But that is now all past history."

Suddenly Crosby's bravado broke down. With a pathetic gesture of utter despair, he looked straight at Dorothy, and said, "But, Dorothy, I did it all for you. Perhaps you other men cannot understand what it means to love a girl enough to commit a crime for her. Perhaps your finer natures would not feel that crime *could* result from intense and passionate love. But in my case it did. Ever since Dorothy became

engaged to Justin Arnold, I've wanted to kill Justin Arnold. I've lived for it, and toward it. He had everything, and I nothing. He had fortune, home, leisure, and added to those he had the promise of the girl I love! I tried not to do this thing; I had long talks with Justin, begging him to give up Dorothy, who never loved him. Had he spoken kindly to me, or even frankly, as man to man, it might have been different. But he taunted me with my poverty, with laziness, and with general undesirableness. He even *dared* me to go ahead and win Dorothy from him if I could, saying he knew I could not, because I had no money. With his death, his money would all be mine, also his home, and also—as I firmly believed—the girl that we both wanted. The consequences you know. The further consequences you will now learn. I have made a will—for I suppose that at the present moment the estate of the late Justin Arnold is legally mine. At my death it will revert to Dorothy Duncan. You probably think that my death in the near future is probable. That is true, but the future is nearer than you think. While making this confession to you I have, perhaps unnoticed, taken a deadly poison which will inevitably accomplish its end in a short time. I have made my confession, but I ask no forgiveness—I ask no pity or sympathy. But, Dorothy, remember I did it all for you. For you, *darling*—but I have failed."

With a last despairing look of love and longing at Dorothy, Crosby folded his arms on the table before him, and dropped his head upon them.

## THE SKEPTIC TO HIS LADY

BY WITTER BYNNER

WHAT shall I do, who may not leave  
And yet who may not stay?  
I come—but never can believe  
Until I go away!

I doubt you with your equal eyes  
Of knowledge and of youth;  
Your lovely wonders must be lies—  
And yet they may be truth!

Too hopeful not to come and see,  
Too skeptical to stay,  
What shall I do who may not be  
Beside you nor away?

# PANAMA, CITY OF MADMEN

By John Fleming Wilson

TWELVE years ago I was in Panama, and in spite of revolution and war it was a city of rest and peace. It reposed under the torrid tropic sky in serene and humane enjoyment of life. I and my travelling companion, he a lively Frenchman, found ourselves perfectly content to sit in the shade and idly wonder how many days it was going to take to get our luggage across the Isthmus, or how long it would be before we could tear ourselves away from the fascination of pure inactivity.

I am in Panama now. It is wonderfully changed for the better so far as municipal conditions go. The mud, the mosquitoes, and the picturesque filth are mostly gone. One does not buy one's drinking water from a dirty jar. Electric lights have taken the place of candles. Cheap *coches* replace the ancient tram-line. The morning paper is no longer printed in French.

But the contentment, the charm, are departed. There is no more yellow fever, but there has arrived another and mental *calentura* which has changed the old city into one of the strangest and unhealthiest cities in the world. No such conditions as exist to-day along the Canal Zone ever have been before or ever will be again. Panama is a city of madmen, a playground for the insane. The streets and cafés are thronged with men intoxicated not with liquor but with the deadly poison which our American strenuosity distills when transplanted under the tropic.

We are doing, we say, the greatest piece of engineering work ever done in the world. We boast of it across the world. The Panama Canal is the most prodigious achievement of mortal man. They tell me here in hard, austere tones that it is the monument of American Genius.

That monument stands over the grave of American sanity.

I landed at Balboa, on the Pacific entrance to the Canal, and realized within ten minutes that I was in the oddest of odd lands. The eyes of the men on the great government pier were the eyes of slaves, the set eyes of men obsessed by a single and enormous idea. They moved quickly, without wasting muscular energy. They halted precisely on the spot they wished. They heard nothing but the gist of what was said. They responded to questions with a clipped "Yes" or a brusque "No."

They were machines, moving more freight across the Isthmus than had ever been moved with such facilities in the history of the world. They were helping to dig the biggest canal on this earth. The first ship was going through in 1913. They cared about nothing else.

Later, at the old hotel, I found a former acquaintance, with whom I had often whiled away an afternoon in the Parque de la Catedral. He looked me over critically and then smiled.

"It is good to see a sane man," he remarked.

"You mean——?"

"All other Americans are mad," he answered gently.

We sat and smoked quietly. The dim stars shone upon us through the high mist that was soon to thicken into the clouds of the rainy season, and a huge night-moth slowly swung round the staff of a palm in his nocturnal, dreamy maze. I was content and at peace. After all, the old city of Darien still held its humanity and peace.

But there was a brisk clatter of hoofs, the rumble of wheels, and a *coche* swung up before the hotel and two men leaped out. They were talking in rapid, high-tension voices. They rushed into the café, and we heard their impatient order for beer. Three minutes later they were again in their rig, rolling away down the street.

"Drinking on a wager?" I suggested.

"Sober men," my friend answered, "but Americans, canal-diggers. They could spare only three minutes. Your canal must be done next year." He sighed.

For two days I wandered about, the one idle American in Panama. Then the police became suspicious of me, and I sought my friend, El Teniente Cecilio Sinisterra of the "Vigilantes." To him I explained my peaceful mission. "Now, why do your confounded police bother me?" I demanded.

Sinisterra passed the compliments of the day and apologized. "It is because you are not mad about the Canal," he said.

"You mean——?"

"You sit down and keep quiet. You talk of other things. You do not address strangers on the subject of cubic yards and shovels and the I. C. C., my friend. I will tell my men that you are an Englishman."

"But I'm an American, as you well know," I protested.

Sinisterra shook his handsome head. "No one would believe it. All Americans know nothing but the digging of the Canal. No American would come here except to work or to criticise the work of others and hasten the completion of it."

Later I received due apologies from the police officer, who smoked a friendly cigarette with me and intimated that I should not have written down on the hotel register my nationality as "American."

Then I met Charlie Ward, who, to my knowledge, has done many

things in many parts of the world. He looked at me out of tired eyes and asked me what portion of the Canal I was working on.

"I am not working on the Canal," I answered. "Is there no place where we can sit down a while and rest?"

"You are the first man who has asked that question in my hearing since I have been down here," he said, sighing. "Everybody keeps moving. You know we are showing the world how to build a canal."

"What are you doing?" I inquired presently.

"I'm playing the piano in the Hotel Panazone café, the central ward of this mad-house of Panama. If you want to know why I'm getting good money as a musician, go down to the railroad station when the eight-thirty comes in to-night and see the spectacle. Then follow the crowd up to the Plaza Santa Ana, and you'll see what I mean."

So I took *coche* to the station and waited for the Saturday night special from Colon and Culebra. Waiting with me were two or three hundred of the nearly four hundred hacks which Panama boasts. The horses drowsed in the shafts, the drivers slept on their seats, and across the little plaza I could see the waiters in the International Hotel standing silently in the doorways. For the moment I forgot the Canal, and saw only Ancon Hill beautifully eminent against the veiled sky.

There was the clang of bells. A long yellow train swept round the curve and into the station. Instantly all was life and movement. For five minutes I watched one of the strangest sights I have ever seen.

The car-wheels were still revolving when from every platform sprang scores of men, who rushed out of the turnstiles and called for *coches* in stern, solemn voices. Followed, husbands with their wives; a few families were but little behind them, and last of all toiled a dozen women with babies. And they were all oblivious to everything but the getting of a hack to carry them uptown. Men called out and women waved frantic hands. The Jamaican and Panamanian drivers were overwhelmed, for as soon as one vehicle was filled its occupants demanded instant departure, in spite of the fact that the narrow street could allow of but two hacks abreast. Each driver rang his bell furiously and lashed his horse into the jam, while his fares commanded impatiently, "Faster! Faster!"

The last *coche* departed, and there were left a good five hundred people still unsupplied. They all knew that a five minutes' wait would bring other *coches*, but they could not wait. Time was precious. So they hurried up the Avenida Central in a long procession, dragging their children along, bent on pleasure, determined to have their good time strenuously, without waste of a moment, nervously possessed by the Canal fever, which means the delirium of eternal activity.

I had thoughtfully secured a *coche* for myself, and I directed the *cochero* to drive slowly up the avenue, so that I might watch this frantic

yet solemn procession. In the second block I saw a young father and mother trying to carry along a crying child. I stopped the hack and offered to take them uptown. Instantly they were in and desired to be driven quickly to the Parque de la Catedral. "We must make this man go faster," the man said impatiently.

"Is any one sick?" I inquired.

The man did not look at me. His eyes were fastened on some goal invisible to me in a set and staring gaze. "We must hurry!" he said.

"I'm sorry," I murmured.

The woman's voice broke in: "We had better walk around the Plaza Santa Ana first, Charlie," she urged. "The band plays till nine-thirty. Then we'll go to the Central Hotel and have something soft to drink. You must get us a room at the Tivoli for to-night. We must be up in time to go to the lottery-drawing. I promised Emma we would take her there and show her the sights. Hurry!"

Duly we hurried through the lovely night and were at the Plaza Santa Ana within four minutes. The band was playing, and presently I saw my guests walking rapidly round and round the square, the baby dragging its feet between them.

With hundreds of others, they were trying to have a good time.

At ten o'clock I went into the big café of the Panazone. Every table was crowded, so I made my way to the little platform where Charlie Ward was playing the piano. He nodded over his shoulder at me, and I seated myself in a chair behind the screen.

By the brilliant lights, I could see that the throng was almost entirely made up of solemn-faced engineers and clerks. They sat, each stiffly in his chair, shoulders tense, eyes steady, brown hands before them on the table. They were drinking beer or coca-cola exclusively. I perceived but one man drinking liquor, and he was plainly a superior executive of some sort, stimulating exhausted nerves. He seemed to be listening intently to the music which was rolling out from under the pianist's skilful fingers.

Suddenly the music stopped with a crash, and there were nods of approval, but no applause. Almost instantly two singers rose and raised a rollicking ditty about Panama and the canal. When it ended Charlie came over to me for his moment's rest.

"Queer crowd for a café," I remarked. "Nobody laughs or even smiles."

He looked at the clock and groaned. "I've six more hours of this work."

"When did these birds die?" I demanded.

"They're only lame," he answered. "The branch broke with 'em this afternoon when they did n't make last week's record. They're from the Pedro Miguel Division. They expect me and this piano to

make 'em forget their trouble. Well, I must n't let 'em think too much. Me back to the keys."

For two hours I listened and watched. Gradually the stern, almost ascetic faces relaxed. The sinewy hands ceased to clench, the keen eyes to stare into the distance. Beer was ordered in increasing quantities. Several groups, drinking coca-cola, switched for a moment to spirits, and Charlie Ward tuned himself up till the lilt and swing and beat of his ragtime seemed to stir the very floor, while the singers seemed possessed of a very devil of speed and patter. They were trying to hypnotize these obsessed canal-diggers into freedom from painful and absorbing thought; they were white-faced in their agonized purpose of giving relief to tortured souls.

At midnight Ward sat down beside me for a moment, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"We've got 'em going," he said huskily. "I've got to wake 'em up out of their Canal nightmare for sure and make 'em forget their troubles. It's up to me." His weary eyes met mine. "Watch 'em!"

He went back to the piano and sat there a moment breathing deeply and heavily. Then his hands crashed down on the keys, and I understood what he had been working up to.

Never have I heard such barbaric music. It was a "roll," a mingling of terrific rhythm and savage melody, an irresponsible, insane, and rapturous flood of sound. And as it flowed down the room I could see that the austere faces were losing their fixity. Feet thumped on the floor. Hands beat on the table. Eyes glanced and lips moved.

For five minutes we were released from the spell of the Canal. For that period of time the enormous obsession was lifted. Cubic yards, and soft rock, and slips, and the eternal roar of machinery, were forgotten. These tortured men raised their glasses with bravado, and the smoke of their cigarettes floated softly above them. For that moment, and under the brutal fascination of the blatant and sonorous music, they became human. But when with a final fling the pianist stopped, they once more froze to steel and iron.

The two singers rose and tried an ancient and familiar home ditty. In any other foreign land and among any others than these supermen, there would have been silence and shifting glances. Here it merely started conversation, the never-ceasing talk about the Canal.

Ward managed to rouse them again transiently with a barbarous "rag." At its conclusion I saw the unearthly and insane tenseness return to faces and expressions. I knew then what was being done.

The United States had taken her best and most capable. She boasted to the world that she would do what all other nations had refused to attempt or failed to achieve. She was accomplishing her great vaunt, and in that prodigious feat she was making mad a vast army. She was

moving earth and rock, damming rivers, and building locks out of more terrible materials than ever Egyptian king constructed pyramids or palaces. The traveller by the Nile sits and ponders on the millions of human lives that perished to erect the monuments of a Rameses.

Some day the visitor to the Panama Canal will know that this greatest of engineering feats was accomplished by destroying the mental balance of a hundred thousand Americans, by driving mad the choicest of our race in a contest with inexorable time.

What will happen when these men return to America? I asked myself.

They will move in restless circles through a miserable existence, mad and in agony, dreaming nights of terrific accomplishments, unable during the day to find peace or contentment in ordinary tasks. And in all the towns of all our States men at evening will feverishly demand the barbaric song and savage minstrelsy which alone can appease the nerves of the being whose sane soul is buried in the concrete of Miraflores or lies within the smooth depths of La Boca.

As Charlie Ward puts it, every man who comes to the Canal Zone is tuned beyond any possible concert pitch, and—the strings will break. And Panama, pleasure city of the canal-worker, is a city of madmen.



## THE OUTPOSTS

BY ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH

THOSE who keep watch are of the first to die  
Upon the outer ramparts of the night,  
When creeping foes their muffled weapons ply  
With hope to reach the circled camp-fire's light.

Far out the lonely outpost warning sends  
Ere plunging death can still him into sleep;  
Before the foe with fatal force descends,  
The long lines in defensive order leap.

So bravely do they die who stand on guard  
As dauntless sentinels of truth and right,  
By unseen foeman's silent daggers scarred,  
But not until a warning wakes the night!

# ADVENTURES OF A RECLUSE

*By Eleanor Mercein Kelly*

Author of "The Privateer," etc.

"H A!" said Mr. Wylie. His roving telescope came to a sudden stop, focussed upon a blossoming peach-tree in his own immaculate landscape, about which circled a small brown creature, trying frantically to leap into its branches.

"Samuel! Bridget! Fritz!" he shouted as he stumbled down the stairs. "My pistol, instantly! There is a dog on the premises."

Now, Mr. Wylie's gates and fences bore the legible notice in two languages, "Dogs Keep Out." There had been an incident in his supersensitive youth connected with a playful poodle, torn trousers, a lady-love who giggled, and a critical moment indefinitely postponed. Mr. Wylie had almost forgotten the incident itself, but the hurt it left remained with him—perhaps because no greater hurt came to take its place. His gates and fences would also have borne the notice "Ladies Keep Out" had ladies shown any disposition to trespass.

As he advanced upon the intruder, pistol cocked, followed by three excited elderly retainers, suddenly a little red head appeared among the peach-blossoms, and a high voice greeted him with cheers.

"Goody!" it cried. "Come on quick, old man. Give him a boost!"

"Eh?" said Mr. Wylie. "What?"

"Boost Major up the tree—can't you see? We're chasin' a wat, a big wat with a fur tail! He wunned wight up this tree, and me after him. But the Major could n't climb—legs too short. O-o-o—oh!"

Amid a great crackling and a shower of blossoms, a small, skirted creature arrived with a thud at Mr. Wylie's feet. The General Housework ran forward with screams; but the apparition was already swarming earnestly up the tree again. From the topmost branch floated a sad voice: "The wat is went. I scared him off when I felled. Oh, gee!"

At these tidings the dog ceased yapping and cast himself despairingly upon the ground. That was the moment for Mr. Wylie's shot, but he let it pass. There was further crackling, and the descending voice continued: "I'll just pick a big bunch of these pink fings for

Muvver while I'm up here. Then she won't be so mad at me for wunnin' away. Here, Maje! . . . Say, if that wat comes wound again, old man, just let us know. We'll fix him! I guess the kind of wats what has fur tails has wings, too, haven't they?"—this from a distance, where the apparition was rapidly disappearing.

Mr. Wylie exchanged speechless glances with his household.

"Every blossom a peach," he groaned presently.

"Is ut bhoy or gurrl I dunno," murmured the General Housework, "but anny way it belongs to the widdy-lady who was after movin' into yon old cabin the day;" and she indicated a dilapidated cottage in the near foreground.

This was the property of Mr. Wylie's nearest neighbor and enemy, who had long declined, for purely malicious reasons, to sell it. Now, in addition to maintaining such a blot upon the landscape, he was about to turn loose upon it a child, a dog, and a widow. Mr. Wylie strode back to his library, beheading crocuses all the way.

Later he became aware of a monologue occurring at his study-door. The voice was that of the peach-tree, but subdued and rather tremulous. "Sit wight here like a good little woolly sheep," it murmured. "Yes, I know you want to come home with Papa, sheepie dear, but you must act like a little man about it. You is a present. You see, I fought I could just put those old pink fings back on the tree where they growed, but they all swivelled up. Muvver says when I take somefin of somebody's I must give 'em somefin of mine. So be good, now! I'll come over and play with you every day."

At this juncture Mr. Wylie seized the pistol and sallied forth. At his threshold he trod upon something which rolled, so that he retained his footing only by a frantic effort.

"Da—er—confound it!" he said. "Where's that dog?"

The boy, round-eyed, wagged a reproving forefinger. "Somebody's goin' to wash out your mouth with soap," he said. "The Major's waitin' outside the gate. Muvver wead him that sign about dogs, and he's werry sorry he chased your wat. Excuse him, please. He's so young he can't wead yet. Say, old man, that was a little woolly sheep with wheels you stepped on. I——" Here his eyes wandered to the pistol, and widened upon it with delight. "Gee!" he cried. "I'll bet that's a present for me! How did you know it was my birlf-day? Why, I just *prayed* for a pistol. Goody, goody! I'll wun show it to Muvver;" and, snatching the pistol from the limp fingers of its owner, he made a successful get-away.

Mr. Wylie looked after him, dazed. "Here, you!" he shouted presently. But it was a weak shout, and the little figure was already far away, intricately hop-skip-jumping homeward.

It should be mentioned in passing that the pistol was loaded, as

usual, with blank cartridges, a fact which Mr. Wylie recalled several times during the day with a feeling of relief.

Early the next morning, he was startled from his studies by a sound close in his ear, a hiss which caused the flesh to rise horribly along his spine.

"S-s-st! May I please whisper?"

"Why in h—in thunder do you wish to whisper?" he cried, whirling about in his chair.

"'Cause the lady in the kitchen said I must n't disturb you."

"She was right," grunted Mr. Wylie.

The whisper cheerfully continued: "That's a dandy pistol you given me, old man. It's the biggest one I ever had. Don't you fink p'r'aps it might be a—a wife?"

Mr. Wylie rustled his papers fiercely. Out of the corner of his eye, however, he observed that the weapon was proudly displayed in a patent-leather belt which encircled the abdomen of his visitor.

"I play it's a wife, any way. I'm going to be a soldier next year," went on the whisper. "Muvver's finished, so I came over to help you with your housework."

"What's that?" said Mr. Wylie.

The boy politely repeated the remark aloud.

"And why," demanded the bewildered gentleman, "should you come to help me with housework?"

"Because of the pistol, of course," explained the boy. "That's obbergations. Muvver says we must always pay obbergations. Like I given you that woolly sheep with wheels—don't you know?"

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Wylie. "So your mother is a lady, is she?"

The boy smiled tolerantly. "Did you fink she was a boy?" he asked. "Whoa, there, Pegasus!"

Mr. Wylie, glancing down in some surprise, observed that his visitor was mounted. The boy followed his glance.

"Sometimes Pegasus is a pony and sometimes she's a broom," he said. "Where shall I begin? I can sweep, and dust, and wipe dishes, and stick pins in the cushion—my, but ain't your tummy big!" he interrupted himself. "I expect you're pretty fond of goodies, old man."

It was a home thrust, and Mr. Wylie winced under it. "Sweep and dust—pooh! Can't you do any sort of man's work?" he countered scornfully. "They're making a girl out of you, a regular sissey girl!"

The boy looked crestfallen for a moment. Then he clutched up his scanty skirt to expose the unmistakable garment underneath. "Girls don't wear pants with pockets," he triumphed. "And takin' care of ladies is man's work, 'cause my uncle said so—there, now!" he added over his shoulder, as he caracoled away upon the restive Pegasus.

Mr. Wylie began shortly to betake himself and his studies to the observatory on top of his house—"to escape from that brat," he explained casually to the General Housework. It was not often that he felt the necessity of explaining anything to anybody; but he was guiltily aware of a strange fascination which his neighbor's cottage seemed to exercise upon his telescope. Great activities were in progress there. Rugs were being beaten, windows scrubbed, fences whitewashed—everything personally conducted by a slim little person in black, whose hair gleamed like a red flash of sunlight as she flew from one task to another. Mr. Wylie wondered that she had breath for the snatches of song that came to him faintly up on his housetop.

Himself a housekeeper of parts, he followed the widow's manoeuvres with an absorbed and jealous interest. The change in the little old cottage seemed positively uncanny. A white ruffle and three geraniums appeared in each window; a hammock swung ostentatiously between a fence-post and the one tree; the tiny porch put on a summer costume of green mosquito-net. Modest efforts, these; yet the widow's establishment began to wear a distinct air. Mr. Wylie took to making aimless excursions down the road, putting on full steam as he neared her gate. Comfortable odors hung about the place, as of soapsuds and cooking gingerbread. Toys littered the lawn, and a basket of sewing seemed permanently to adorn the doorstep. Once the door swung open in the breeze, revealing an interior which brought the investigator to a full stop. For suddenly he was homesick, homesick as a child that wants its mother.

"Posies, and sofa-pillows, and tidies on the tables," he noted wistfully, "with all the furniture sitting sort of catty-cornered." He remembered the boy's urgent invitations to call, and laid a tentative hand on the gate.

But at that moment a dog came around the corner of the cottage, a fat, curly dog who paused dramatically; crouched, and crept forward with an ominous beating of the tail.

Mr. Wylie withdrew. "Hang dogs!" he said.

Until late that night his prim parlors resounded with a creaking and groaning as of weighty things in motion. When he retired, hot and happy, all of his household gods were staring askance at one another from unaccustomed angles, where they stood rakishly cater-cornered.

That all women were fools Mr. Wylie had realized long since—at about the period of the torn-trousers episode, to be exact. But presently the watchful telescope revealed a depth of folly that caused him to bite his lip, and stamp his foot, and brandish the telescope as if it were a weapon. The widow was preparing to convert a strip of hard-baked clay behind her cottage into a vegetable-garden. Her trusting method was to make holes with a trowel, empty a packet of seeds into each, pile

on clay, and turn it into mud with a watering-pot. This shortly became unbearable to an amateur of gardening. Mr. Wylie seized his cane, and strode hatless across the lawn in a frenzy of impatience.

The frenzy simmered down somewhat as he approached the widow's fence. Her shapely back was toward him, and red curls tumbled neglected into a convenient sunbonnet which hung from her shoulders. The old fear of the sex that giggles caught at his throat. The dog was at hand, too, busily scratching up what seeds had already been interred. Mr. Wylie hesitated, poised for flight. But just then the boy Dickie staggered out of the cottage with a watering-pot.

"Why, hello, there!" he cried, aglow with hospitality. "Muvver, Muvver, here's my friend at last! Climb wight over the fence, old man. Wait—I'll help you!"

The widow faced him, blushing beautifully, both hands at her dishevelled hair. The telescope had not done justice to her face. Mr. Wylie swallowed hard, and opened fire.

"Ground has to be fertilized, plowed, and furrowed before you can raise a crop. Any fool ought to know that."

"Fertilized, plowed, and furrowed," repeated the widow, with an uncertain smile. "Are those things hard to do? You see, we've always lived in a flat in town."

"Ought to have stayed there," commented Mr. Wylie, leaning a casual elbow on the fence. At that moment there was an intense growl. He jumped. The Major, crouched, was advancing upon him with an ominously beating tail. Mr. Wylie turned toward home.

"He's goin' to chase you!" cried Dickie, clapping his hands.

Mr. Wylie began to trot.

"Wun, wun!" cried Dickie. "He's catchin' up!"

Mr. Wylie ran. He heard the panting of the beast at his very heels. He ran faster. It was a pace that could not last. Gaining a tree, he placed his back to it, and desperately raised his cane. The Major, with one fierce leap, gripped the cane in his teeth and waggled triumphantly home with it.

Later, in the dim starlight, a rotund gentleman might have been seen to mount the widow's fence with some difficulty, pausing astride the top-rail to get his breath. His objective point was the Major's dinner-plate, upon which he intended to place a piece of poisoned meat, technically known as a button. He had no shame; in fact, he wished that a dog had the nine lives of a cat, so that he could take them all.

But as he panted there, a whisper floated from the cottage: "Oh, Muvver, come quick! Here's somefin' perchin' on our fence. I bet it's that Brownie, flew in to dig our garden. . . . Oh, gee! Now you've went and scared him off!"

Dickie returned the cane, at his usual morning hour of arrival.

"You're a pretty good winner for such a fat old fellow," he remarked, "but the Major can certainly beat you. Gets more practice, you see. He's always chasin' wats, and sticks, and people, and fings like that. Ain't he too funny?"

"Ain't he!" said Mr. Wylie grimly. "What is a Brownie?"

The boy raised his eyebrows. "I'm afraid you don't wead werry much! A Brownie is a fairy."

"Ah?" said the other, rather complacently.

"A fearful ugly kind of fairy," enlarged the boy, "with little skinny legs, and goggle eyes, and a huge tummy." He paused to inspect his host, a comparison dawning visibly in his mind which he was too polite to mention. "But it's a nice kind of fairy," he added. "Awful generous. Comes and does chores for people it likes, and brings 'em presents. We've got one of our own."

"Rot!" said Mr. Wylie.

"Yes, we have, too! He puts a present on our porch 'most every night—vegetables, or eggs, or flowers, pats of butter, dead hens—all sorts of funny fings. Muvver says he's a lonesome old fellow, kinder scary with people. She says if she ever catches him on our place, she's goin' to put her arms wight wound his neck and kiss him good."

"Eh? Pooh!" said Mr. Wylie uneasily, while a curious tingle ran up and down his spine.

Spring seemed to have a special significance for him that year. He spent many an hour prowling about among the gnarled old fruit-trees that made so brave a showing in his garden, often stopping to pat one on the trunk with an odd feeling of fellowship. There was a stirring warmth in his own veins, like the rising of sap. Birds, which he had tolerated merely as insect-destroyers, he began to recognize as pleasant sounds in the world—even as lovers and home-builders. Often he sat in his observatory when night fell, watching the lights blossom one by one in the city below. "Each light," he thought once, "means a home down there, and a woman waiting. . . . Rot! Half of 'em are saloons!" Still, the lights filled him with a vague loneliness.

One fragrant, bloomy day, he cast aside the sober precedent of years and burst upon the world in a sky-blue cravat.

"Weal silk!" exclaimed Dickie, caressing it with loving fingers. "Just the color of Muvver's new dress. Only hers ain't weal, of course—just make-believe silk, hers is."

Mr. Wylie pricked up his ears. He had a feeling that sky-blue dresses were hopeful signs in widows. "Is she going to a party?" he inquired.

"Nope. Better 'n that. Big Dick is comin'."

"To—to see *her*?" gasped Mr. Wylie.

"Yep. To stay. Haven't you saw our screen-porch? That's

where he's goin' to sleep, so he won't cough. Outdoors in the country, people stop coughing. That's why we comed."

Mr. Wylie was breathing easily again. He had remembered the uncle who said it was man's work to take care of ladies. "High time to practise what he preaches," he muttered to himself.

"My, but we've been busy gettin' weady!" continued the boy. "See my duck pants? Pretty nice, eh? Muvver's got on the new dress, too. She looks just peachy. You ought to see her."

"I'd like to," murmured Mr. Wylie, his fingers itching for the telescope.

"Come on, then! You shall," cried the boy, tugging at him with hospitable hands. "I'll take you. She won't care."

Mr. Wylie looked frightened. "Nonsense!" he said testily. "Your mother is a busy woman. I——"

"No, she ain't!" cried the boy. "You can't be busy in a new dress. She's just sittin' in the parlor, lookin' out the window. Aw, come on!"

Mr. Wylie yielded. After all, he thought suddenly, it was customary to call upon the lady one intended to make (in the future, of course, the distant future) one's wife.

Exhilarating thought! It carried him along buoyantly, head up, stomach out, so fast that the boy had to run to keep up with him. A robin in a gaudy vest cocked a knowing eye as he passed, remarking, "Aha! You too, old chap?" Mr. Wylie burst into tuneless whistling.

At the gate the Major crouched and pounced as usual, but Mr. Wylie brushed him aside as if he had been a fly. Dickie spurted ahead, and opened wide the cottage door. There sat the widow, with hair gleaming ruddily above the blue dress as he had known it would gleam. But she was not looking out of the window. She was seated upon a nearly invisible young man, whose head she clasped right in her arms, kissing the top of it over and over. The boy flung himself upon them, shouting, "Big Dick! Daddy!" Nobody seemed to notice Mr. Wylie.

One may chain eyes and brain to a book, but the ears are treacherous independents who decline to be fettered. Our hero, deep in his studies and neglecting the telescope for more profitable pursuits, was nevertheless aware of June singing outside in the quiet world, of a child's voice coming and going, of a girl's laugh, as placid and tender as the clucking of a mother hen. June, a child, and a woman—these blessings were not meant for him, perhaps, but at least he shared them unaware with the gentleman who coughed.

He found this gentleman on his grounds one day, coughing harder than ever, and leaning against a tree as if the effort tired him.

"Confound the fellow! Wish he'd keep his germs off my prem-

ises," he thought, and would have passed with a surly nod. But the other motioned him to wait.

"I was on my way to see you, sir," he said when he could.

"Well?" grunted Mr. Wylie.

"Just to—thank you," said the other, sitting down upon the grass.

"Ought to go West," remarked Mr. Wylie.

The other rested his head wearily against the tree and closed his eyes.

"Cured my brother," volunteered Mr. Wylie, further.

"Your brother was fortunate to be able to afford it," said the other listlessly. "Perhaps he did not have a wife and child to consider."

There was a pause.

"She works too hard," was Mr. Wylie's next contribution. "Had no business coming out here in the country with no man to look after her."

"You're quite right," said the other. "You see, her brother died while I was in the hospital. They never told me. But the boy did his little best. So," he smiled, "did the Brownie."

Mr. Wylie fidgeted.

"Lately I've been wondering," went on the other, "whether the Brownie could be counted upon when—well, later. The doctors give me two or three months at most, unless I go West. She's so young and inexperienced—perhaps you've noticed that? She thinks I'm getting well. There will be very little money. Neither of us has any family. I'm rather desperate, sir. I—I don't quite know what to do."

Mr. Wylie cleared his throat defiantly. "Thought she was a widow. Meant to marry her," he blurted out, very red.

The other gave a long sigh of relief. "I hoped so, sir! That will be all right, then. Thank you. Thank you very much."

"You—you think it *will* be all right?" Mr. Wylie questioned anxiously.

"Yes," said the husband. "Just give her time. She's a brooder, you know, like those hens that must set on stones, sticks, anything at all if they can't get eggs. One chick does n't satisfy that sort. That's why she married me—I needed her. You need her, too. You're old, and lonely, and—well, she's a brooder, God bless her!"

"I see," said Mr. Wylie. He said it reverently.

The husband got to his feet, and they shook hands.

"Better go West," urged Mr. Wylie. "I'd be willing to advance——"

But the other interrupted, flushing. "A fellow does n't accept money, thanks, even from Brownies. I've had a position offered me

here, and the house is cheap. She loves the little place, too. Perhaps you have seen how cozy she's made it? I shan't be afraid now. Going West is only a gamble, any way."

Mr. Wylie hastened to his study, where he shut himself in with a thumping heart and a strangely guilty conscience. "What more could I have done?" he argued. "Refused to accept the trust? Rot! That I like it does n't make any difference. Somebody's got to look after them, and I'm the man. I'll do it, too—hanged if I don't!"

A letter on the desk seemed to stare at him accusingly. It was from the brother in Colorado who had been cured. He wrote that he needed a confidential secretary, and asked Mr. Wylie whether he knew of anybody he could recommend.

"How can I recommend a fellow of whom I know nothing except that he coughs?" muttered Mr. Wylie. "Going West is only a gamble, any way."

He tried to fix his mind upon the future. "We must rig up some sort of play-room in the attic. Better put on a conservatory—women like posies all the year round. I'll keep an eye out for a pair of carriage-horses and a pony. Do the thing up right while I'm at it. Wonder how long the fellow'd last in Colorado?"

He jerked the letter out again and tore it savagely in two. At that moment the door opened a crack, and a small red head appeared.

"Any jobs for me and Pegasus to-day?" inquired the owner of it.

"Here!" shouted Mr. Wylie. "Take this confounded letter to your mother, and tell her she's to leave for Colorado at once—the sooner the better!"

For two days he was excessively absorbed in his studies—so absorbed that he could see no one, not even a lady who came, so she brazenly informed the General Housework, to kiss him good-by. Once he was aware of a whisper at his keyhole: "'Tain't ezzactly a present—it's just a lend till I come back again. Somefin for you to play with, old man, somefin I knew you'd like!"

Later, he was aware of wheels dying away in the distance; later still, of a plaintive whine.

"What the deuce is that noise?" he cried, striding to the porch.

There he found his entire household assembled, throwing sticks for the Major, who pursued and returned them in pleased absorption.

"Sure we had to kape him busy, sorr, so's he would n't remimber," choked the General Housework, as the three slunk away to their neglected duties.

Hours later, venturing forth, she found her master still upon the porch, patiently throwing sticks for a patient, weary dog.

# THE GRATITUDE OF JOHNNY FLYNN

*By Lowell Edwin Hardy*

"I 'VE been talking with the new man that's moved in down the street," remarked Mr. Glummer to his friend Mr. Dorsey, as he seated himself carefully on one side of the doorstep of Mr. Dorsey's residence, leaving sufficient room for the other inhabitants of the building to pass in or out. It was evening in Natoma Street. The day had been a warm one for San Francisco, but now, at dusk, the cool sea-breeze coming in through the Golden Gate fanned the hot pavements. Mr. Dorsey was enjoying the air and a quiet pipe after supper. He was in his stockinged feet, and the feel of the brick steps under them was restful and soothing.

"I 've not had the pleasure of the man's acquaintance as yit," replied Mr. Dorsey, with the utmost impartiality, "but, from what I 've seen and heard, I judge he has plinty of time for conver-sation, if for nothin' ilse. He's not up whin I go by to wor-rk in the mornin', and I see him down at Casey's almost ivery night, the cintre of an admir-rin' thr-rong, declaimin' with for-ree and illoquince on var-rious subjicts. He's not wor-rkin'?"

"Not just now," responded Mr. Glummer apologetically. "He's looking for a job. That's what we were talking about. He's a good workman on vests and pants, but he's been out of a job for two months now, on account of trouble he had with his last boss, for upholding the independence of the American Workingmen, Who shall Never bow down their necks and be the slave of Capital while he lives! It was just grand. I wish you 'd been there to hear him."

"It must 'a' been," replied Mr. Dorsey, unimpressed. "What kind of a job does this her-ro ixpect to git? Does he want to be prisidint of a bank, or privit sicker-ritary to Jawn D. Rockefeller?"

"Oh, no!" Mr. Glummer hastened to explain. "He said he'd noticed me taking home piece-work, and he thought maybe I would turn some of it over to him to do, if I had more than I needed. He said he thought it would be better than going back to work in a shop again, because he could have more liberty, and his wife could help on it,

too, in case he was called away. I was thinking of doing it, just to help him out for the time being. I'm sure he'd be grateful."

"He probably would," assented Mr. Dorsey coldly. "That kind giner-rally are. But look out for thim—they're not to be thrusted. Not that gr-ratitude is to be dispised, for it's a gr-rand thing whin properly conthr-rolled. The throuble is that it's like a gun in the hands of a woman. Yez can niver till whin it's goin' off, or which way it's goin' to shoot.

"There are other raysons, too. In the fir-rst place, it frequently happins that thim that yez thinks has the most of it has none at all. Sicondly, it's liable to lead to misunderstandhanding, as I raymimber it did betwixt two frinds of mine whin one of thim thried to ixpriss his gr-ratitude for a favor done him by kissin' the other one's wife. His frind came home and found him at it. Thirdly, some, meanin' well but bein' impethous by natur-r, overacts the par-rt and does yez up. Thim are the ones yez wants to look out for.

"I'm rayminded of a feller I once knew by the name of Pether Walker. He was a painther by tr-rade, and had a good job with a fir-rm down on Mission Street. He was goin' out to wor-rk one mor-rnin' as usual, havin' raypor-rted at the shop and bin sint out to do siveral small jobs in differint par-rts of the city, whin he mit a frind of his by the name of Flynn—Johnny Flynn. This Flynn was jist comin' off a big drunk, which had lashted siveral days, and had lost his job, hocked his brushes some place, the addr-ress of which he could n't raymimber, and was afraid to go home. Pether Walker was a very kind-hear-rted man, and, takin' pity on the lad, he sthopped to speak with him. Flynn was sthandin' by a water-rin'-through whin Pether came up, and as he arrived the drunkar-rd was beginnin' to pull off his coat, prepar-rin' to dive in.

"'Farewell, cruel wor-rld!' he says. 'Farewell!'

"'Hould on!' says Pether Walker, gr-rabbin' him ar-round the waist and raysthRAININ' him. 'What are yez thryin' to do? Sthop it, or I'll have yez pinched!'

"'Leggo!' says Flynn. 'I'm goin' to ind it all!'

"'Not in a hor-rse-through,' says Pether. 'Yez'll git the glanders. What's ailin' ye, that yez desire to make way with yezsilt?' and Flynn up and tould him his throubles.

"'I've spint ivery cint of me week's wages,' says he, 'and if I go home and till me wife I've losht me job, she'll mur-rder me!'

"'Cheer up,' says Pether. 'If wor-rk is all yez need to save your life, I can give it to yez.'

"'If yez can do it,' says the pinitint, almost in tear-rs, 'I'll niver forgit it. I'll repay yez if it takes the rist of me life. Ye'll see that I'm not ungr-rateful.'

"'Quiet, man!' says Pether. 'Let be! 'T is nothin';' and he handed him a half-dollar. 'Take that,' he says, 'and git yoursif some brick-fasht. Yez need it to stidy your narves. Thin,' says Pether, handin' him a paper with a street number on it, 'go to this addr-ress and till the lady you 're the man that's come to do the job of paintin'. It's but a couple of hours wor-rk, and I've got other jobs to do that 'll take the rist of the day. Whin I git me time-check, I'll meet yez and tur-rn over to yez what ye've ear-rned. All I ask is that yez do a good job, shlightin' nothin', for I'm raysponsible. Are the arrangements satisfactory to yez?'

"'They are,' says Flynn, thryin' to hug him, but Pether, blushin', hild him off. 'God bless yez for this kind deed! Ye'll niver raygrit it! With me wages in me pocket, howiver small, I'm not afraid to go home, and lave it to me to fix up a sthory that 'll do for the time bein', at leasht;' and he tur-rned and sthorted off down the street.

"At the cor-rner he halted. 'I'll jist sthop in and have a br-racer before I go to wor-rk on the job,' he said to himself. 'Thin for a mouth-ful of brickfasht, and I'm as good as any man;' and he wint in at the swingin' door. Inside of one minute he had put the longed-for dhr-rink where he felt it was needed, and immeajitly he began to hold up his head.

"'Pether Walker is a frind,' he raymarked, glar-rin' defiantly at the bar-tinder. 'If they was mor-re like him in this wor-rld, it 'ud be a betther place, and a poor mon 'ud have some chance!

"'Good old Pether!' he says, wipin' his eyes, and he decided to have another to cheer him up. 'Pether 'ud be the fir-rst to suggist it if he was here. He always likes to see iverybody happy—that's the kind of a mon Pether Walker is!' says he, dar-rin' the bar-tinder to deny it.

"Well, affther havin' one mor-re dhrink, and makin' a light meal off the fr-ree lunch counther, Mr. Flynn decided he needed no further food at the time, so he tould the bar-tinder to put him up a few dhrinks in a small flask that he could take with him—and off he started with it in his coat-pocket. Whin he got to the addr-ress mar-rked down on the paper, he wint up and knocked on the door, which was opened by a lar-rge, fat lady in a Mother Hubbar-rd wrapper and closely followed by a pug dog.

"'I'm the man that's come to do the job of paintin',' says Flynn, leantin' heavily against the railin' and speakin' his piece like a parrot. It was only by a sthrong effor-rt of will-power that he was able to refrain from speakin' likewise to the lady's twin sisther, who was also followed by a pug dog. But he raymimbered times whin he had seen two of things before, and he was n't goin' to make any br-reak and br-ring down disgrace on his frind. Out of the haze that invopled the whole wor-rld sthood sharp and clear the determination to be a cridit to the man that had befrinded him.

"The wimin picked up the pug dogs and hild the doors open.

"'Will, it's about time yez came,' they said. 'Reely, it's a outr-rage what a leddy is compelled to put up with. Little did I dream whin I was livin' as a child in Paw's big manor-house down in Vir-rginyer that I'd iver come to be threatred thus! That darned old landlor-rd,' says she, 'pr-romised he'd have it done thr-ree weeks ago. But I don't suppose it's your fault. Come in.'

"Flynn wint in, and the woman lid the way to the bath-room. 'I presume you know what's to be did,' says she, a-cover-rin' up a bare place in her rat with a piece of chimical hair that still clung to the par-rent scalp. 'Thim walls is a sight, and yez can't git 'em cover-red up any too soon to suit muh.'

"'They're turrible,' says Flynn; 'but lave it to me, ma'm. I'll fix thim so's ye'll be able to see your pritty face rayflicted in thim whichever way yez look.'

"'Behave yoursilf, sir!' says the fat lady, blushin', very much pleased. 'Ye fergit yez place. I'll lave yez to your wor-rk.' She wint out, closin' the door. Mr. Flynn, who was a good deal of a divil with the ladies, threw her a kiss, and thin, pullin' the flask from his pocket, imptied it with a low bow to the door thr-rough which she had jist passed.

"'Now for the job,' says he, spyin' about the room. 'I wonder what color she likes. Ah, here we are!' He dr-ragged out of the closet in the cor-rner the paint-pot and br-rushes lift on the job.

"'Blue,' says he, lookin' into the pot, 'and a be-utiful shade of blue at that. It's the color of her eyes.' He sthood there gazin' at the door like a sick cat, till, suddenly raymimberin' what he was there for, he gr-rabbed up the brush and wint to wor-rk. 'Gotter make a good job of it,' he says to himself as he progrissed along one side of the room, 'same as Pether Walker would if he was here—God bliss him! Tell yez what! I'll do a betther job'n he would—jist to show him what I can do. Seems to me this here brush sphatters a good deal!'

"He looked down at the floor, which was a sight. 'Thash all ri'. I'll wipe it up. No! Tell yez what I'll do—whasheruse wipin' up? Paint the floor, too, so's shpots won't show!'

"Half a hour later the fat lady, wishin' to see how the bath-room was goin' to look, sneaked up to the door and peeped in.

"'Hey! What d'ye think you're thryin' to do!' she yelled, whin her eyes risted on the linoleum that cover-red the floor. 'I did n't want that done. Who iver hear-rd of a sky-blue floor!'

"'Thash all ri', lady,' says Flynn. 'I'm doin' a goo' job. The man that sint me out here ixpicts it of me, and he's goin' to git it. Begone, woman!' he says, and closed the doocr.

"The fat lady tore to the telephone. 'Hello!' she says, whin she got the number of the paint house. 'Whatter yez mean by sindin' a man out

to me home,' she says, 'that's either dhrunk or crazy? He ain't doin' what I wanted, at all.'

"'Hould the line a minit,' says the feller that answered the telephone. 'Don't worry about him,' says the man, whin he came back, havin' spoken to the boss. 'Pether Walker is the bist man we have in the shop, and he niver dhrank a dr-rop in his life. He knows what he's doin'. He gits his instructions from the landlor-rd. The tinints have nothin' to say about it. Lave him alone, and don't inter-rfere with him at his wor-rk;' and they hung up. She wint back. By this time Flynn had finished the bath-room, and, havin' some more paint still raymainin', he'd moved on to the kitchen.

"Whin she ar-rived on the scene he was jist finishin' a fancy job on the eight-day clock that sthooed on a shilf, and was lookin' about for the next thing that needed a coat of paint.

"'Got some more lift yit!' he raymar-rked as she opened the door. 'Not goin' to quit till it's gone. Told Pether Walker I'd do him a goo' job, and I'm goin' to do it. Show him I'm gr-rateful fer what he's done. Table's nixt;' and with one swing of his ar-rm he swipt the table clear of the dishes that sthooed there from the brickfasht, and they cr-rashed to the floor. The fat woman let out a scr-reech that was hear-rd for blocks, and she shlammed the door shut, over-rlookin' in her excitement the pug dog which had pre-ceded her into the room and was lift a prisoner. She rushed out into the street, yellin', 'Po-lice! Po-lice!' and sank faintin' at the corner. While she was bein' rayvived by the neighbors, some one wint fer a officer, and they rayturned to the house.

"Whin they opened the door to the kitchen, the fat lady, who was bein' suppor-rted by her frinds, suddenly came to, and, with a turrible cry, br-roke from their raystrainin' hands and fell on her knees in the cintre of the floor.

"'Oh, Fi-Fi!' she says, claspin' the pug dog in her ar-rms and goin' off into hi-stirricks.

"'Loo' out! Fresh paint!' says Flynn, for, havin' finished the table, he'd given the dog a coat of br-right blue jist for luck, and was at wor-rk on the gas-stove. 'Wait a minit,' he says to the officer, 'till I finish the lig's. Pether Walker would n't like it!' But the cop ray-fused, and off they wint, followed by the assembled cr-rowd and the threats of the fat woman, who had agin rayvived and was promisin' to sind the society for the previntion of animals aftther him."

"How did it all come out?" asked Mr. Glummer anxiously. "Did the poor man go to jail?"

"They kipt him overnight," replied Mr. Dorsey, "and in the mornin' he was rayleashed, after a hear-rt to hear-rt talk from the judge; and he signed the plidge, promisin' to keep sober for six months."

"I'm glad it was no worse," remarked Mr. Glummer, much relieved. "The poor fellow meant well. He was trying to show his gratitude, but he was misguided, that was all."

"He was," agreed Mr. Dorsey. "His intentions were good enough, but the results was just as bad as if his only thought was to do his friend up. It ended with Pether Walker getting fired from his job on account of him, and, hard times coming on just then, it was six months before he got another. He came near starving."

"I don't believe this man down the street drinks," persisted Mr. Glummer earnestly. "It seems a shame not to do something for him."

"If you know of work, tell him where it is, and let him go find it. No man will ever hold down a job for long that he doesn't want bad enough to go after; and if you did get it for him, you can't stay to help. You must leave him at the door!"

"Then you would not advise me to pass some of my piece-work on to him?" queried Mr. Glummer, after a thoughtful pause.

"Not unless you feel strong enough to stand his gratitude!" replied Mr. Dorsey.



### THE VIRTUE IN THE "BUT"

"JUSTICE is blind"; but she sees more than she takes official notice of.

"PUT something by for a rainy day"; but don't let that lead you to forget the pleasant weather of the moment.

"THE world owes you a living"; but it's just as well to go out and collect the debt.

"OLD friends are best"; but every once in a while a new one turns up fit to make into an old one.

"MAKE friends"; but don't expect friends to make you.

"MAN proposes"; but, often enough, the baby disposes.

"THE way of the transgressor is hard"; but his wife's is harder.

"OPPORTUNITY knocks once at every door"; but if you're knocking at the same instant you're not likely to hear the lady.

*Warwick James Price*

# FLOOD-BOUND

*By Clinton Dangerfield*

IT was Mother who first spied that extraordinary raft drifting gently toward us across the yellow overflow. A good many things had gone by—driftwood, tables, chairs, animals, even an empty boat—but they all were deflected by the main current and did not anchor with us.

So when she called excitedly, "Come here, Father! This one's wobbling our way!" I hurried to the window.

At first I could see only something flattish. Then it showed up for a queer-looking mattress. Instead of being water-logged, it rose well out of the flood. And on it lay a man, flattened to it like a squirrel when he's frightened.

The mattress floated calmly over Mother's geraniums and pinks and baby's-breath and all the other old-fashioned flowers which two days ago had been serenely growing in her old-fashioned garden! It floated clear over the spot where the garden gate stood submerged, and then came bump against our front door. The man raised his head.

We hurried downstairs into nearly twelve inches of water, and let him in. Also we rescued the mattress, which was one of these inflated-with-air rubber things.

The man drew a long breath; then he sputtered out:

"Wait till I get back to my office! I'll fire the superintendent, the conductor, the engineer, the very brakeman, on that infernal train!"

Mother led the way upstairs into our bedroom. We had moved the cooking-stove up there, and all the kitchen utensils; because the water covered the first floor soon after the Talbot levee burst. But the room was in apple-pie order. The big rockers looked homey and inviting. The cat was curled on her cushion, purring. Mother waved our guest to a rocker.

"Set down and tell us all about it, while you are takin' off those wet socks 'an' shoes," she said hospitably. "We ain't had a mite of news in the two days we been flood-bound. Why are you talking about a train—when you was floating on the water?"

Our visitor was thin, almost dried-looking; but he had an air about him that was kind of ferocious, and made you think maybe he might be taller 'n he appeared.

He glared at Mother as he sank into a rocker.

"Why was I talking about the train? Because the infernal superintendent——"

"Excuse me," said Mother gently, smoothing her wide, soft lap, "but that is n't a pretty word. We should never call a fellow-being infernal."

The man glared again. He swallowed something kinder choky; then he said, "That dear, delightful, adorable superintendent of the K and C ordered the train held at Queens Junction for his particular benefit. Consequently, when the second levee burst we happened to be at attention in a hollow behind a curve. Something went wrong with the wires, and the second section caromed into us. I found myself twenty feet from the train, with my inflated mattress, which I always put over the berth mattresses, lying in sight. About that time, before I had even time to inspect myself for injuries, the flood came swelling up the hollow. Instantly I realized what a value that mattress had. I seized on it and dragged it up a hillock. When the water reached me, I floated off very well. I have always grasped opportunity wherever it offered. But for that I should never have attained my great success. I saved my life, as you see."

"Were n't there no other passengers?" inquired Mother eagerly.

"Of course—numbers!"

"What became of them?"

"How do I know? I saved myself. I asked no help. Let them save themselves. They are either drowned or safe by now. The hollow is ten feet deep in water. I'd like to have some dry clothes, now these shoes are off."

I escorted him to Jack's room. Jack's our son, and, like our girl, he was away at school. We wanted to send 'em both to college after that; but there was n't enough money. They'd have to come home from school and work. And, now the overflow had ruined the season's chance of a crop, they would be hard up against it helping me make bread.

We had been talking over our losses just before the mattress came, and I was feeling so blue I was glad of a diversion. Mother did n't need one. She has the kind of faith which rises in trouble like yeast.

When I groaned over the water, Mother only said calmly that "it was bound to be," and that "some mighty crooked eggs often hatched straight chickens."

"I s'pose you mean the Lord 'll turn it to our advantage," I grunted, kinder provoked. Too much faith nettles me sometimes.

But Mother only said peacefully, "Yes, Father; or He 'll show us how to turn it to our advantage."

"Then He 'll have to be mighty explanatory!" I growled. Mother looked at me with that look that makes me feel like a bad little boy instead of her husband, and her senior by three years. But she only said:

"I'm going to make you some doughnuts."

She made 'em—great big, light, golden brown, sugary doughnuts. My, but they tasted and smelt good!

When our visitor came out in an old suit of Jack's, Mother was bustling about the table. Already she had hot coffee nearly ready. Then she had preserves and cold biscuit, while eggs were sputtering in the pan with some ham. She had put on her glasses. When the man returned, she gave him her first close look; for her eyes are not gifted with near-sight.

Then I saw her start and lay down the fork she was turning the ham with. As he sat down to wait until the meal was ready, she said slowly:

"Maybe you were n't joking about firing all those men?"

"I was not," he said grimly.

"Then, maybe you're really a powerful man? Maybe you own that railroad?"

"I do. My name's James Rodney Nasmyth, madam."

She gave him a long, slow, searching gaze. Then she dished up the ham; but she set the dish on the stove. Turning back to Nasmyth, who I now recognized as one of the biggest railroad men in the whole country, she said quietly:

"You said a while back you'd made your success graspin' opportunity."

"I have."

"Are you hungry?"

He rubbed his hands. "I should say so!"

"Ain't you thinking nothing about those other passengers?"

"Would it do them any good if I did? Let us have dinner—I will be glad to pay you for your trouble in full."

"Payment in full, for value received—that's what you men say, ain't it?"

"It's a common phrase, madam."

"Would you know who I was if I told you I was Al Lacey's daughter?"

He started slightly, and glanced keenly at her.

"You may be."

"I certainly am. Here's my husband to vouch for it. Now, Mr. Nasmyth, you promised to buy my father's lands for fifty thousand dollars. Instead, you looked around and bought up the water rights above him, out there in the irrigation country. Then you turned off the whole supply. He went to law about it. He fought hard. He had n't your money. While he fought, his fields dried up. You ruined him. His lands went under the hammer. You bought 'em for a song—or, rather, you legally stole 'em."

"Why, Mother!" I gasped. "You never told *me* all this!"

"I don't harry myself discussing the wicked. But when the Lord trusts a judgment in my hands, I can speak. Mr. Nasmyth, you don't get a bite until you sign me a check for twenty-five thousand dollars—just half what you promised Pa. He's dead now. I'm his only heir."

"Mother!" I cried, dumfounded.

But her placid blue eyes had changed. They were steely. They were resolute.

She looked at Mr. Nasmyth.

"Will you eat?"

"Not at that price?" he said scornfully.

"We'll see." With a few dexterous movements, she removed the extra plate and its furnishings.

"Come, Father," she said, and sat down.

I hesitated, painfully. What an awful thing—to starve a castaway! Then a sudden vision of this Napoleon of finance floating serenely away from the wrecked train, careless of the swamped wretches left behind, hardened me. I sat down.

That night every scrap, every crumb, of sustenance, was under lock and key. A mouse could not have found anything to say grace over.

I slept but little. I fancy Mother was wakeful, too. I don't know. Our guest had Jack's room. Hunger made him restless, for he rose early. So did we.

Mother had dried his own clothes for him, and he was back in them. Except for food, she offered him every care.

That morning she served a wonderful breakfast. The smell of the coffee floated around like scents from Heaven. I saw our guest squirming in his chair.

At last he spoke:

"Madam, be reasonable! I'll give you one hundred dollars for breakfast."

Mother looked at him over her glasses. She was pretty pale, like she used to be before she spanked Jack. But she was resolute.

"Twenty-five thousand or nothing."

I saw him measure me with a desire to murder. But we were about the same middle age, and I'm heavy built and mighty strong. He gave up the idea.

Three scandalous meals we ate that day, with the financial Napoleon lookin' on. He had pluck—that was evident. That night, when we went to bed, I was uneasy.

"Mother," I said, "he's thinner than a grasshopper. He'll die!"

"He cannot die till his appointed time," says Mother, mighty serious. I gave up.

About midnight I heard a tap on the door. I sat up, thinking of burglars. Then I remembered no burglar would swim out here.

"Come in," I said.

The financier put his partly bald head in the door.

"Tell your wife I want a square meal. The check is hers."

But Mother had heard. She got up immediately. I was dizzy, thinking of what she had accomplished. She dressed. She got that meal on the quickest time ever. Then she motioned to the pen and ink on her side table.

He sat down, drew out his check-book, and wrote—the full amount—and signed it.

Then he put it in her hands and sat down to the table. Mother got me into another room—it was the girl's—and says she:

"Father, I am about to tell you something. The heart of the sinner is desperately wicked!"

"I knew that before," I said, with a grin.

"He has written that check; but he'll never let us cash it—unless we get there first." I stared.

"Well, we can't help his gettin' loose same time we do!"

"Down in the cellar is the little rowboat I took away from Jack because he was too venturesome on the big creek. It's fearful small, but it will hold one passenger."

"My cats!"

"The Lord made me put it in the cellar. The oars are there, too. It's cedar—a good boat. I would n't tell you before, because I was afraid you'd row out in it. But now I'm willing you should go. I feel we are led."

"But the cellar is full of water!"

"Yes, but the water's only twelve inches over the kitchen floor, and the boat is bumpin' up against the trap-door. We can get it out."

I gasped. "How do you know?"

"I investigated yesterday. Come and help me get it up. The moon's shinin' out bright, and the Lord will preserve you on your way to the bank."

He did. I'm here to show it. But I had a mighty lonesome trip. I got to our nearest city all right. I cashed that check, and deposited the money to Mother's account in another bank. Then I went back to our home. But I went in a big hired boat, ready to bring Mother away at her pleasure.

I left the two rowers outside, and I came in the balcony door. He was sitting at the table, and a pile of batter-cakes was going down.

I said weakly, "Mother, is he still eatin'?" He answered me himself.

"Not still, but again," he said calmly. "The best meals I've had in twenty years! Where have you been? In bed?"

"In the bank."

He hopped up. "The bank? *What* bank?"

"Second National. They cashed your check all right."

"It's a lie!" he screamed. "You had no boat!"

"No, I had n't; but Mother found me one. She thought you might stop payment if you got there first."

He fell into a chair kinder weakly.

"Just what I meant to do!" he said, with a sorter sob in his voice. Then he rose and made Mother a stately bow.

"Madam," he said, "if your present husband ever dies, wire me! Together we could conquer the earth."

Mother smoothed out her gathered, checked-gingham apron over her wide, soft lap.

"I would n't want the earth," she answered gently, "if I had to take you along with it."



## LONDON FACES

BY CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

I CANNOT forget those London faces—  
 Tragic eyes that haunt me yet,  
 Ghosts of men in terrible places,  
 Shadows of women . . . I cannot forget.

On the Embankment they hurried by me,  
 Stared at the Thames—and then moved on;  
 The evening fog that hovered nigh me  
 Hid them an instant, and they were gone.

At Charing Cross and Piccadilly  
 They followed my hansom through the rain;  
 Nights were black and nights were chilly,  
 But thick with the poor was each London lane.

Pale, pinched faces, oh, how ye haunt me,  
 Thin, gaunt beggars with lifted hand,  
 A sea is between us, but still ye want me,  
 Lonely derelicts tossed on the Strand!

A sea is between us! . . . But I remember;  
 Though leagues divide us, ye haunt me yet—  
 Eyes with the age of bleak November,  
 O London faces, I cannot forget!

# THE LITTLE LAND MOVEMENT

*By Forbes Lindsay*

Author of "Daniel Boone, Backwoodsman," etc.

THE statement is frequently made nowadays that the American nation is entering upon an acute stage of evolution. Sharp changes in our social economy seem to indicate radical reformations in the national life. One of the most remarkable of these changes is the tendency among our city workers to revert to the soil. It is a turning of the tide that for years has set from the country toward the towns. This backward movement has been prompted and stimulated by the high cost of living and the killing competition in the cities; the tyranny of trade-unionism; the overcrowding of the professions; the improved prospects and conditions of rural life.

The glamour of "the great white way" is pitifully evanescent. The lure of the pavement leads to sore feet and heavy hearts. It is no new thing, the desire of the disillusioned countryman to return to the field, and the yearning of the wage slave for the free life in the open.

During these fifty years past, the cry, "Back to the soil!" has been incessantly raised by public educators and echoed by public reformers. Tens of thousands would have given willing response to it, but only within late years has the way been made practical to them.

The principal factors in creating avenues for the return to the land have been the work of the Federal and State reclamation services, in making available to settlers rich lands at low prices, and the introduction of intensive agriculture, with its revolutionary effects upon settlement.

Irrigation has not only made productive extensive areas of former waste, but it has taught the lessons of scientific horticulture and economy of occupation. Our ideas as to the methods and means of farming have undergone complete reformation in the course of a generation. The government unit of land "under a ditch" is seldom more than forty acres, and this, in most instances, is a superabundance.

The knowledge that, if intelligently handled, five acres in almost any part of the United States will support a family in comfort, is one of the most valuable discoveries of the age. It makes proprietary farming

possible to the man of small means, and under well-nigh ideal conditions. He occupies an essentially higher plane of independence than the farmer of many acres. He owns his land outright, or has an assured prospect of doing so in short order. He is not subject to a capricious labor supply, nor to the fluctuations of a manipulated market. He operates his holding without help and produces from it such stuff as is in constant demand in the nearest centre of population. Furthermore, the net profits from a five-acre tract are frequently greater than those from a farm of twenty times the extent.

But the latter-day theory of farming extends beyond the consideration of a living from the soil. It contemplates the enjoyment by the farmer of social advantages, the lack of which has been the chief influence in driving our country youths to the cities. This is now considered an essential feature of every plan of agricultural settlement. It is secured in a variety of ways. Where every five or ten acres is occupied by a family, close neighbors are on every hand, and village organization is a natural consequence. It is possible for the small farmer to locate upon high-priced land adjacent to a city, and this gives him the additional advantage of securing distribution of his product direct to the consumer.

The "rural settlement" plan, as exemplified by the town-sites that are invariable features of the Reclamation Service projects, is extending over the United States in every direction. It is applicable to a district in which the farm units are of ordinary size. The essential element is a residential centre, from which good roads radiate to the outlying farms, making it possible for the farmer to enjoy town life and go out daily to his work, as the suburbanite goes in to his office. The arrangement entails many benefits that are usually beyond the reach of farmers and their families.

In one of the most beautiful valleys in Southern California the principle of independence with a little land is being carried to its ultimate conclusion. Near the thriving city of San Diego, a colony of Americans, drawn from widely separated sections of the United States, and from many walks in life, are working out a problem that bids fair in its solution to exert a national influence.

For several years the Littlelanders, as they appropriately style themselves, have been quietly engaged in proving that one acre is as much as a man single-handed can reduce to its utmost productivity, and that when adequately cultivated one acre is sufficient for the support of a family. This demonstration has been carried beyond the experimental stage, and a score or more of one-acre farms are fulfilling their allotted function.

It must be admitted that this achievement has been facilitated by exceptionally favorable conditions. The location in San Diego County

insures perpetual summer for the crops, and the vicinity of a rapidly growing city secures a ready and permanent market for the output. Nevertheless, the success of the Littlelanders sets a standard for comparative accomplishment elsewhere. The underlying principle is sound, and its truth applicable to any fertile region. The claim of the Littlelander is that, given just such an amount of land as he can thoroughly cultivate without assistance, and a nearby market, a man has the means of happiness and independence.

The venture upon which the Littlelanders entered without thought beyond their personal interests promises to assume the character of a substantial movement. It is attracting the attention of political economists and experts in agriculture, who realize its great significance and the possibilities it presents to a great army of misfits, anxious to escape from the thralldom of the cities, but whose only chance of securing a footing on the land depends upon some avenue requiring the outlay of but little, if any, money.

Already the basic idea of "a little land and a living" has borne fruit in the bill before Congress to establish the United States Homestead Service. The promoters of the measure contemplate a national agency to encourage and help the poor man to become owner and tiller of a piece of land. They would have the Government open recruiting stations for farmers, as it does for soldiers and sailors, offering to each worthy applicant a few acres and the means of working them, with the prospect of absolute title as a reward for improvement.

All occupations of the cities are encumbered by a superfluity of workers, who necessarily represent an economic waste. In a large proportion of cases it is not fitness for the factory, nor inclination for city life, that holds them, but simply inability to transport themselves to more congenial and suitable environment. The professions are glutted with incompetents depressed by the pitiable poverty that shrinks behind a fictitious appearance of prosperity. Among these victims of misdirected ambition are many who, given the opportunity, would gladly exchange their precarious positions for the care-free life of the proprietor farmer. Indeed, it is from these classes, in proportion to their numbers, that the ranks of the Littlelanders have been chiefly recruited. There are in the colony, each contentedly deriving his living from the cultivation of one acre of ground, men whose former employments were the ministry, teaching, banking, book-keeping, and journalism. The average of education and intelligence in the community is considerably higher than the average of any city, and probably of any rural county, in the United States.

These men have been enabled, through the possession of a little money, to work out their salvation unaided, but there are thousands not less desirous of breaking their bonds, and not less deserving of relief,

who must be dependent upon some such agency as the proposed national Homestead Service.

The advocates of the measure will find their strongest argument in the fact that the results from the operation of the service must justify its maintenance purely as a business proposition. Every man who may be taken out of a situation in which he is more or less of an incubus on the social body, and converted into a self-supporting citizen and contributor to the general health, must be reckoned a material addition to the national assets.



## THE MOON MAIDEN

BY W. B. RIDSDALE

**I**N seas that move not 'neath the golden mist—  
Deep, secret seas that mysteries enfold  
So grim, so beautiful, so old—  
The red sun sinks; then, o'er the hilltop kissed  
By ruby lips of afterglow, full soon  
There lifts, as beautiful, the moon.

The sky is chrysoprase, and rose and blue;  
The sand lies blotched with such a vital red  
As though a giant there had bled. . . .  
The sea 'neath stark-black cliffs holds purple hue;  
The tide ebbs low, and whispers on its way  
A lullaby to passing day.

O'er silent waters in the moon's still light  
There comes a dim, fair form with starry eyes  
And hair that holds, when daylight dies,  
The sunbeams 'midst the shades of darkling night.  
White-armed, she draws me forth with silvern gleams  
Into the Land of All My Dreams. . . .

# THE DEFALCATION OF MRS. MITT

*By Elizabeth Maury Coombs*

“**B**LOW it, honey, blow it! Thar, now, that’s a man!” as the ashes flew before the puffed-out cheeks of the child, like dust-clouds before a summer storm. “You air a Mitt all over—never saw a Woodson in my born days as had any second wind. Now git a splinter or two of light-wood from under Grandmammy’s bed, then go look outen the winder an’ see ef them thar witches ain’t built thar fire right bodaciously in the snow, out under ole Knotty—that’s we-all’s tree.”

The child, charmed—as every night—by the lurid reflections, through the glass, of the flames on the snow, knelt in his accustomed window-ledge and applauded every noiseless leaping fire-spirit that seemed to threaten, with red tongues licked out in mockery, the very topmost branches of the gnarly old tree. It needed only a spoonful of imagination to see the black cats hiss and make bottle-brushes of their tails as the witches astride their burning brooms flew by in the howling wind.

We in the elder’s seat by the real fire hauled up the white-oak basket between us, and while Mrs. Mitt sewed the carpet rags, I wound them into huge rainbow balls for the loom.

On the rough mantel the big clock, which always insisted on taking a prominent part in our conversation, for some time had things all its own way, with only occasional crackling repartee from the fire.

“I’ve done beat you by yards an’ yards, Miss Deacon, an’ I ain’t well het up to my work. I never do git to goin’ fast till long todes the shank of the evenin’,” said old Mrs. Mitt, leaning back in her chair and folding her tiny ivory-colored hands, which always looked as if they had been filched from some old Japanese god.

“I be a quick hand with work. That’s huccome I kin do so much mischeevousness ’longside of it. Who, me? I reckon I is. Why, Lawdy, Miss Deacon, I’ve stolt—not bread, which the Book says ain’t wrong when it says you kin ’arn yo’ bread in the sweat of yo’ brow—’cause Lawd knows when you steal anything you sweat for it—why, miss, I do reckon as how I sweated nigh on todes a gallon an’ a half when I stolt Jim’s money.

“Yes’m, ’t was my son Jim’s. He war away down yonder, diggin’

sassafras fer the mill—they make out to make medicine from out'n it what is got sich er owdacious plain smell it 'll cure you o' somepin what you ain't never had. Yes'm, Jim's daddy's cousin-once-removed had done had er kitteny trouble all his life—he had done read columes an' volumes 'bout'n it in the almanac. The mill man said 't would cure him jest to ile his j'int's with this here sassafras ile, an' git up early in the mornin' an' saw a cord o' wood befo' breakfas', an' behol', in six months he ain't knowed he had no kittenys. Now, war n't he cured? Well, then, wait a piece—Doc he come along, crossin' to Gibson's holler from Chestnut Ridge, an' Jim's daddy's cousin up an' axed him to root him over an' see what that thar ile had done fer him, an' Doc he up an' said he ain't never had no kittenys, 't was indergestions what the wood-saw had cured—he said as how he could cure 'most anything with a good dose of wood-saw—I hearn him say it myself. 'Anything, suh,' says he, 'from a to izzard, from love to liver.' But, Lawd! I done wandered clean away from mine iniquities, as the Bible says.

"But now I laid out ter tell huccome I stolt money. When I fust come back from the county home I was the most sevigrous saver you ever see—I jest natu'ly honed after savin' everything. I could n't ca'mly put a roundin' spoonful er sugar in the preacher's coffee. I'd make out like my hand shuk an' spilt off a dribble er so, any way, 'fore I could git it clean to the cup.

"But the night when my son Jim tolt me he aimed fer to marry was the night I ripped an' I r'ared. I jes' paraded him. Jest when we had 'gun to save, here he wanted to bring a gal critter here to eat we-all out'n house an' home. I knowed he was a-hatchin' up devilment when I seen him cleanin' his finger-nails. I jes' said he could n't marry no gal in the world, I did n't keer ef she was strewed with gol'. Jim went on parin' his finger-nails, an' the more he quieted the more I quarrelled, twell by-an'-by I jest talked so much twell I jest knew nobody had n't ever bin in the right but jest me.

"I axed him her name. He grinned kinder sheepish an' said:

"'Pearl, Mammy. Don't you think it sounds sorter pretty?'

"That was enough said. I jumped back on my high horse an' hit rode clean away with me.

"'All right,' says I, 'all right, Jim Mitt; the day you bring that gal in this here cabin door to take the corn-bread an' molasses out'n yo' pore ole mammy's mouth to put it on her back, I'm agoin' away. Nem mine, I'm agoin' to walk away. Nem mine, you need n't lend me no horse; yo' po' ole mammy kin walk to her grave, a-pullin' her coffin after her!'

"Then he up 'n' says, says he, 'Mammy, 't ain't goin' ter be no manner er use in you a-doin' this here way. I 'arned this here cabin, I kin 'arn anurr. I'm goin' back to haulin' roots—goin' to-morrow,

'less 'n' you say you ain't not only goin' to let my wife come in, but let her come in with gladness.'

"'Jim,' says I, 'when I say that word I'll have been dead or 'stracted.' And sho 'nough I was!

"We set on our mad two whole days—ain't say no word ter one 'nuther. The third day, he hitched the team, kem to the do', an' looked like he was goin' to speak. But I ain't made no manner er motion like I seen him. He walked in the door then an' went over to the chimbley-piece, took some money out'n his pocket, an' ris up old Tick-a-Tack"—she pointed to the clock—"an' slipped it under thar.

"I ain't made out to see him yet, so he got in the wagon an' went away. An' that boy was down in the valley at work twell 'most Christmas.

"'Long 'bout that time we-all's Ole Red had a calf, an' I was out in right smart sorts of weather, till one night I jest hung over the fire—seems like I could n't get it to warm me on more 'n half of my sides to onct. Then I got so hot that I could 'a' cooked a hoe-cake on myself. A misery run along my wish-bone, an' I got up in the night dreamin' 'bout springs runnin' cool over green rocks an' me dabblin' in 'em. But I was a little chile ag'in, in my pink gingham slip—an' 'fore I knowed I'd drunk the water bucket clean dry an' was shiverin' like a hound dog. An' then I did n't know no more—tho' I keered a gre't deal, an' I strove ter know, an' I 'rastled wid beastses an' b'ars who would set on my gizzard an' grin at me until all on a sudden they would turn into little lost babies 'way off in a howlin' storm an' me to hunt 'em in the wet an' the cold.

"Then one mornin' I hearn somebody that I knowed had been talkin' a long time—pleasant-like but far away—say:

"'Try an' swaller this, an' then you can lay down—I knows ye 're tired.'

"And thar was a little gal with a gre't big head o' hair an' a little pink an' white face scroochd down under it—jes' like a lady apple in a oat-straw sack. I says, says I:

"'Who is you, any way?'

"An' she says, kinder soft-like, 'Polly.'

"I ain't never had no darters, but I ain't never felt the need of 'em. A dozen darters ain't wuth a Polly—an' that thar Polly was a Polly an' a piece! She tuck'n set out ter *make* me git well. An' her vittles had such a taste to 'em—her bacon taste like chicken, an' her chicken taste like pie.

"When I got well she said she was agoin' away, an' it jes' seem like I'd jes' kill myself an' split ef she did, so I suaged her to stay. She'd been agoin' out into service down in the valley when she hearn I was sick an' stopped by to nuss me. 'Lawd, Lawd,' I says, 'why in the

name er reason did n't You see to it that Jim Mitt fall'd in love with a gal like this!' But I knowed as well as the Lawd—an' better too, I reckon—that it ain't nuvver the nice gal his old mother sics him on that a man runs after.

"Polly she said I did n't have no money to be takin' keer of a gre't big strappin' gal like she be, an' I swore Jim had gin me money 'fore he went away, an' every now an' then I'd git out some er his money I'd seen him hide, an' use it. I'd use it dribble by dribble, but some way it seem like it jes' faded away—I'd suffer an' jes' sweat blood 'bout'n hit at night. An' one time I jes' thought I would try to die, 'cause a man come by Punk's barroom down at the cornder an' say Jim Mitt sent word to his mother, did she find his money he hid under the clock, an' that thar word was my death, 'cause that thar seemed like he 'spected me the rogue I had turned into. I jes' died an' went to the devil that night. Next mornin' I could n't git around, my head was all in a swum.

"I told Polly I did n't have no more money, which war Gawd's truth—I did n't, an' Jim did n't have but twenty-seven cents under the clock—so she was a-gettin' her little duds together an' cookin' up some extry vittles fer me, fer I could n't seem to git my stren'th back, what with the p-neumony on my lung an' the sin on my soul. Polly was goin' down in the valley 'cause she had a bad case of step-ma at her house, an' I was a-fixin' ter tell her good-by; an' Gawd help me, a pore sinner, I'd done tuk'n tuk Jim's last twenty-seven cents an' was goin' to give it to her ef I went to jail for it. As well be kilt fer a sheep as a lamb, has allers been my motter—an' it's tuk me a long way.

"Well, I looked out'n the winder an' I see a wagon come a-bumpin' up the road, an' Jim Mitt was in it. An' I'd 'a' sooner see the devil—'cause *him* I *could* pay back in his own coin, as the Word says, fer sholy the devil's own coin must be lyin' an' stealin'. Polly seen him comin' too, but, says I, she ain't knowed him, an' that's the reason her leetle face is a-gettin' so pink, fer she come from 'way over yonder in Shifflet's holler.

"I waited thar jest a-holdin' my heart in atwixt my teeth, plumb skeered it 'ud jump out an' run under the bed. He stopped the wagon an' come right in the do'. He opened his mouth to say, 'Mammy,' but a-comin' todes the bed he sees Polly, an' fust thing I know he'd done grabbed her an' me both in his arms an' hollers, 'Lawd, mammy, this here house is sho' done growed—growed big enough to hold you an' this Pearl of a Polly—an' so is my arms!' An' he give us a hug both together that would have made a b'ar plumb jealous-minded, an' when he got his second wind he says:

"'Mammy, did you ever find the money I left for you under old Tick-a-Tack?'"

# THE TALE OF A POLITICAL SPOIL

*By J. Sanford Rickards*

## I.

IN its one-store days the Hocsier hamlet of Terhune had been content with a home-made post-office: not such as now ornaments the front of one of its modern stores, but a cage built in one corner of its only business room and pigeonholed according to the alphabet.

Although then, as now, post-offices were considered to be political plums, it so happened that David Bogan, a Democrat, had been custodian of this one through the respective administrations of both national parties, because his store, on the east side of the road, was the only business building suitable to accommodate the postal services of the neighborhood.

The daily receiving and sending of the few straggling letters and papers that constituted the mail was an item of no small importance in the eyes of the inhabitants; but apparently it was not so regarded by the swiftly passing trains that thundered by the station. No one would have guessed that Uncle Sam paid good money for the transportation of this mail, so unceremoniously was it kicked out at the doors of the "fast mail cars." It was taken on board by an iron lever reaching out from the car door and snatching the mail-bag suspended in a wooden frame. Ike Wallace, who had been operator at Terhune for eleven years, averred that only twice during this time had the iron lever failed to perform its function.

In addition to being postmaster and store-keeper, David Bogan was a Justice of the Peace, and so was referred to as the "Squire." He was also blessed with a "birth-right" in the Quaker church, and therefore held himself and his family uncompromisingly to the old-style faith, refusing to follow his fellow sheep through their stages of religious metamorphosis whereby they successively became Campbellites, Newlights, Methodists, Presbyterians, and United Brethren.

Because of his spiritual predilections, David had never indulged himself in any self-congratulatory attitudes toward his rather exalted position in the community. However, about the year 1890 his dignity

as postmaster had been radically enhanced by a new, factory-made post-office that was sent to be installed in the front of his store, and along with it had come an increase in salary.

In spite of his sober and commonplace habits, David now felt his self-importance asserting itself. Then, too, the advance in income materially simplified his living problem, which was to maintain his mother-in-law, his wife, and his daughter, and teach his son a trade.

These were indeed balmy days. For fifty-odd years, he told himself, he had been casting his bread upon the waters: now it was coming back, and it was bringing with it not merely butter but also a sweet-meat branded "distinction." Now that honor was thrust upon him, surely it was no sin to bask in its radiance! So with great waves of satisfaction he began to recall promises of milk and honey for the faithful and no begging in their last days for the righteous.

In the first year of the reign of the new post-office came store-keeper number two. This was Judson Miller, whose boyhood had been spent in the vicinity, but who, during the six years of his early manhood, had served in the army. He came home on crutches, not as a result of battles fought for his country, but as a consequence of a railroad wreck. After due course of controversy, he emerged from the wreck litigation, walking with a cane, wearing a signet ring, and possessing four hundred dollars in cash. With the money he opened a store on the west side of the dusty pike, directly opposite the establishment of the scrupulous Quaker.

To be sure, he drew away some of the Squire's trade, and this greatly annoyed David's friends, one of whom approached him on the subject: "Ain't you kinder 'feared, David, that this here new store of Judson Miller's 'll take away some of yer trade?"

Before replying David balanced a lump of brown sugar on the point of a sugar-scoop, and swept it into his mouth with a sucking noise.

"Well, I don't cal'late on losin' no great sight. You see, since the gover'ment of these United States put this new 'partment in my store here," and he flourished the scoop grandiloquently toward the cabinet arrangement, "I've been gittin' a right smart of trade from down 'round Fancher's corner an' other places. Nope, I reckon there ain't much danger of it, Andy."

"Well, I s'pose as how you orter know, seein' as yer runnin' the business; but I 'll be consarned if I think that store 'cross there 's goin' to do you any good."

Meanwhile Judson seemed satisfied with a not extravagant patronage. He was also content to lean on the front gate of the Bogan residence on dull days, and recount his experiences of army life to the postmaster's daughter, Lizzie. At such times Lizzie found great comfort in the barrel-stave hammock swinging in the porch.

During one of these midday interviews, her mother's voice fell sharply on her ears: "Liz-zee! Oh, Liz-zee! Come here."

When the daughter ran into the kitchen, Mrs. Bogan began in a milder tone:

"A body would think that porch, with the sun a-bilin' down on thee, is a first rate summer resort, the way thee's always swingin' out there."

"Why, Maw, I was just talkin' to Judson a few minutes."

"'Pears like that's all thee does do. Run over to the store an' tell yer Paw to send me a couple of eggs and a bag of corn-meal, so I c'n make him some corn flapjacks fer dinner. Hurry up, now."

Glad enough to escape further questioning, Lizzie hastened out. Her mother straightened up from the table and rubbed off the dough that clung to her fingers, while she mused aloud:

"I do wonder when that feller's goin' to stop courtin' long 'nough to pop the question? 'Pears to me it'd be better fer him an' David both if their stores could be put together."

But on the following Sunday afternoon, as a group of Terhune's male population sat on store steps and leaned against peeled pole hitch-racks, Abe Farwick, the blacksmith, propounded a question that was destined not only to shatter the ambitious mother's fondest hope, but likewise to expel harmony and peace and to enthrone discord throughout the confines of the village.

"I've jist been thinkin'," said Abe, drawing the stem of a clay pipe from between his teeth, "that the post-office 'll haf to move after the 'lection this fall."

"What in tarnation 're you drivin' at, Abe?" asked Andy Izzard, who had left off his incessant grinding of a tobacco cud in order to catch the full significance of the blacksmith's words. "That office's been in Squire Bogan's store for nigh onto twenty years now, an' I reckon he keeps it as well as anybody else could, don't he?"

"I'm not sayin' that the Squire don't keep it well 'nough; but ye've hearn tell of the sayin' that 'to the victor belongs the spoils,' ain't you? Well, now, if the Republican party wins this comin' campaign, as it's been doin' most of the time for the last thutty years, I reckon there won't be much use of a Democratic store-keeper runnin' the post-office, seein' as how Judson here is a Republican."

Now, Abe, like the majority of the population of Terhune, was a Republican, and could afford to conclude his argument with a very convincing wink. Andy, on the other hand, was one of a few Democrats in town who had consistently voted against the Republican party from the date of its inception, and in no one could Farwick's remark have stirred up more bitterness and apprehension. This anxiety Andy straightway conveyed to David, who received it in a crestfallen manner.

The feeling of uneasiness became widespread in the Democratic ranks as the days of autumn rolled away, but it especially possessed the old Quaker, who began to experience sleepless nights, and to upbraid himself with the Preacher's cry that "all is vanity." If a Republican administration were elected, the post-office must cross the street to his competitor, leaving him without a prop and divesting him of all his fame. He scarcely knew which would be harder to bear, the memory of honors surrendered or the sting of poverty known of old.

Meanwhile Judson sat at his window with a new and unfamiliar thrill. He contemplated the increased income and acknowledged distinction that would come with his appointment. His spirits were running high even as David Bogan's were sinking in sullen despair.

Daily the interests and sympathies of the citizens became more intensified. The two political factions unconsciously shaped themselves, each having for its recognized head its postmaster possibility. This brought on a serious change in business relations: all the Republican customers began to trade with the younger merchant, and only the patronage of the Democratic minority was left for David.

This sounded the first note of warning to Judson's conscience, for he knew that such a falling-off in business would ruin his veteran rival. But what could he do? If his party should win, he would be enrolled as postmaster. That was a perfectly honorable spoil, and had been instituted by a custom as hoary as political parties themselves. Therefore he could not refuse it.

In the community, feeling continued to mount to a high pitch, and it looked as if the once-quiet neighborhood would be torn by strife. For several days Lizzie had not been seen in the barrel-stave hammock. Miller noted this and secretly chafed under the sting of it.

Shortly before election the minister of the oft-conforming flock returned to preach his bi-weekly sermon, and lodged in the home of the president of the Ladies' Aid Society.

"Oh, Brother Williams! I'm so glad you've come!" exclaimed that good lady, the care-worn expression of her voice exceeded only by that of her brow. "The town's all torn by strife an' factions over movin' the post-office. The Republicans 're sayin' that the Squire's havin' it all these years has been jist the same as givin' aid to one of their enemies. I know you can do something that will pour oil on the troubled waters and make 'em think more about their souls' welfare."

"My dear sister, when men are contending for political spoils they shun the contemplation of the welfare of their souls," spoke the pastor, with the air of a prophet.

"Well, I s'pose you're right," she assented resignedly. "An' I do sometimes wonder if we'll ever overthrow the powers of the Evil One."

Regarding the fulfilment of this last, she was to receive no encour-

agement from the incidents of the coming Sabbath day. Her husband was a staunch supporter of Squire Bogan, so every Republican stayed away from church rather than listen to a sermon preached by a minister who had apparently allied himself with the opposite faction by sojourning in one of their homes.

Even the sparse Democratic audience gave place to vacant benches when the preacher began a sermon on the Scriptural admonition to "love one another."

Domestic relations were the next to be invaded. Dick Whaley, a perfectly restful and unenergetic citizen, was driven from home by his irate wife. In emphatic terms she had praised the Squire and laid special stress on the fact that he had always provided for his wife's mother. To this abnormal habit of David's, Dick had taken voluble exception, and thereby hung a disagreement that ended in a violence unsurpassed even by the participations of the small boys of the village, many of whom wore blackened eyes and bruised spots testifying to the loyalty of themselves to the champions adhered to by their respective fathers.

Up to this time but two residents had refrained from taking part in the postal controversy which had now come to be the sole issue in the approaching election. One of these was the Squire's dog—a mongrel of the commonest yellow breed, but a good fighter, who had asserted his superiority over all his kind in Terhune except that other resident—the white bulldog belonging to Judson Miller.

The yellow hybrid and the dirty white bull were the glaring rivals in dogdom, even as their masters had come to represent a feud among the ballot-casters. It was natural, then, that before this political dissension could end, it should descend, for ultimate decision, to these canine rivals.

Election day was gray and cheerless. Groups moved back and forth between the polls and the stores, neighbor passing neighbor without recognition or greeting. The early darkness brought a cold, drizzling rain to disperse the groups of low-voiced, anxious women from the yard-gates along the road. Down at the voting place they had begun to count the ballots in the flickering glare of smoky kerosene lamps; while the knots of men outside retreated to their homes.

Squire Bogan sat by the box-stove in the rear of his store, nervously fingering the leaves of a law book. It was the final day of what seemed to him a losing fight; consequently he was filled with feverish irritation. Over his steel-rimmed spectacles, he vented his feelings to Andy Izzard.

"It ain't lawful ner constitut'nal to change the location of the post-office," spoke the Squire. "I find nothing in these statutes to support the change; an' if the other party moves the post-office, it will be the same as stealin' sugar from my store."

"Jist so, Squire," responded Andy. "Jist so. It's a plain case of bein' robbed of the privilege that's been justly your'n all these years."

An hour later, into the store across the street came a messenger from the polls to inform Judson that the town had gone Republican, and to say that he 'lowed they would soon be coming into his store to get the mail.

Judson locked the door and sat for a long time by the smouldering fire. The spoil was won—surely there could no longer be any doubt about that. He glanced toward the corner where he had decided to place the panelled creation; but the thrill accompanying previous contemplations of this arrangement did not now return. By degrees Miller was beginning to appreciate the ugliness of a community strife that had turned neighbor against neighbor, had ruptured homes, and had driven men from the house of worship; and the cause of it all was the craving for a paltry political spoil to be doled out like so much ginger-bread from the hand of a victorious demagogue. However much he rued the estrangements of his fellow citizens, the hardest part to bear was the scorn of Lizzie Bogan. Prior to the post-office difficulties, he had felt that she looked forward to his daily loiterings quite as much as he; and now he believed she was being loyal to her father at the expense of her own happiness as well as his. He regretted that he had not been more bold back in the peaceful days and entered upon negotiations that now could never be. If such an alliance could have been made, he knew that the conflict of the hour would have been easily averted.

The ex-soldier finally fell asleep in his chair, and his harassing thoughts subsided into dreams where he was tormented by demons in the likeness of his Quaker rival, and ever and anon these gave way before the face and voice of Lizzie Bogan.

A loud clatter brought him back from his troubled dreamland. He started up; his body was cold and numb, and the fire was long since out. The clatter continued at the door until he turned the key. Dick Whaley pushed into the room, and the store-keeper caught a glimpse of eastern light trying to straggle through a cold November morning's fog.

"Gimme two pounds o' pickled meat. I'm goin' home to eat breakfast," announced the early customer, with the faintest suggestion of triumph in his tone.

"D' you mean yer wife's let you come back, Dick?" inquired Judson, between chattering teeth, as he fished into the pork-barrel and speared a chunk of briny meat on a long metal fork abundantly corroded with contaminations peculiar to a country store.

"Yep. The 'lection's over now, an' I reckon there ain't anything more to quarrel about. You got two pounds there, Jud?"

"Well, it lacks three or four ounces, but I guess that won't make any difference."

"I reckon you'd better git as much as two pounds, because—well, because Moll said so." He added the last in a sheepish sort of tone, and Miller journeyed to the barrel on another fishing expedition, this time returning with a smaller chunk of fat between a layer of skin and a streak of lean.

While this was going on, the dirty white bulldog was alternately stretching and shaking himself out from the niche between the kerosene tank and the sorghum molasses barrel. As Whaley passed out, the dog slipped by him through the closing door.

The Squire's yellow hybrid was trotting diagonally across the street, sniffing at the ground as if in search of food. At sight of him, an ugly light flashed from the eyes of the recalcitrant husband, and a triumphant smile played about the corners of his mouth. Under his hat was a sore bump made by the impact of a stick of stove-wood in the hands of his spouse, and Squire Bogan had been the main point of disagreement. However unenergetic Dick Whaley may have been in the presence of work, he was anything but phlegmatic when confronted by an opportunity for revenge.

He glanced each way along the street. No one was in sight. Quickly thrusting his hand into one end of the dark-brown paper package, he pulled out the small chunk of meat and tossed it in front of the advancing cur. Both dogs sprang after the bait, but, as Dick had calculated, the yellow one arrived first and seized it with a snarling growl.

For the space of a second the white dog hesitated.

"Sic him, bull!" hissed Whaley.

A dirty white streak shot through the air and landed on the yellow dog's neck. In an effort to shake himself free, the latter hurled the meat in the direction of their provocator. It had barely dropped when Whaley caught the toe of his shoe under it and sent it into the side ditch a rod away, just as the canine pandemonium broke forth in howls of rage and pain.

A fire-alarm is the only other terrifying signal that could have brought such a response. From the two forty-rod rows of houses the inhabitants poured forth through never-closed gates. To the bellowings that issued from the writhing heap of dirty-white and yellow were added the shouts of men and the glee of boys, all of them snatching sticks as they raced towards the spot.

The Squire and Judson pushed into the quickly formed circle from opposite sides.

"Git back!" the former shouted. "Git back an' give 'em a fair chanct!"

But it was soon evident that this was not needed, for the yellow hybrid had been unable to shake off the first throat-grip of his antagonist. Every spectator turned his eyes on the Squire, who stood re-

garding the form of his dog as it grew more and more limp in the bulldog's powerful jaws.

The Quaker postmaster was like a solitary soldier driven to the last trench: deserted by customers and friends, ridiculed by women and boys, voted out of honor and emolument, as he believed, by fellow-townsmen, he stood witnessing the sapping of the life-blood of his faithful pet by the dog of his successful rival.

Lifting his angry face, he vented the vehemence that was surging in his breast:

"Judson Miller, thee's drove off my customers, stole my post-office, an' now thy dog's killed mine. I reckon I can't stand no more."

With that he snatched the young store-keeper's cane and swung it above his head. But the latter, so unexpectedly thrown upon his lame knee, pitched forward to the ground and accidentally collided with the feet of his assailant with such force as completely to bowl him over, while the cane descended full in the face of Dick Whaley, who had been standing back of Miller. Blinded with pain and rage, Dick lurched forward, kicking and striking at the fallen Squire.

This was a signal for a general mêlée. All the pent-up feelings of the previous days found expression in curses, blows, and hurling missiles. Fists struck out, sticks gouged and whacked. At the bottom of the heap was the ex-soldier, pinned down so tightly he could not move. Just above him was his aged rival, entirely submerged by the human pile save for one free hand, that continued to brandish back and forth a piece of the now broken cane.

By the time the town constable and the neighborhood doctor reached the scene, the rumpus had made the dog-fight of a minute before appear in comparison like a tranquil autumn twilight in the presence of an infuriated blizzard.

Aided by Lizzie Bogan and other women, these worthy and dignified servants of community welfare began patiently to disentangle this conglomerated edition of election returns. When the Squire's head, turtle-like, finally protruded between the legs of those above, his daughter addressed him:

"Now, Paw! Ain't thee ashamed of thyself! Look how thee's went an' broke Judson's cane!"

Before the Squire could reply, Ike Wallace came running up the road from the depot, waving a telegraph blank and shouting:

"New York's gone Democratic! Cleveland's 'lected, an' the post-office won't haf to move!"

The Squire sat up, spitting like a rapid-fire gun.

"I reckon it's about time for me to be puttin' up the 7:43 mail," he offered, as his only observation.

With much difficulty, Judson scrambled to his feet and looked about

for support. Smiling and blushing, Lizzie offered her arm. Proudly leaning on this affectionate substitute for his broken walking-stick, the vanquished victor walked back towards his store. This was a signal for the combatants to disperse.

It is a maxim repeated in every tongue that "love finds a way"; but only in these United States of America do men turn from the passionate moments of anger at white heat and willingly accept victory or defeat as it is dictated by election returns.



## STORM

BY MARY BYERLEY

### I.

CLOUD, Wind, and Drift, and flying Foam,  
Loud let mine answer be:  
Call out the tempest from this heart  
And make me to be free.  
Oh, long I've known the tempest's shock!  
Oh, long my chains have been!  
Sweet Lightnings, heaving Thunderbolts,  
Strike fear to Fear within.

### II.

Wrath against wrath let cymbals clang  
Midmost against the sky;  
You, Cloud and Wind, grim archers, range,  
Nor let my Hates pass by—  
Fierce Hates that tramped my battled soul,  
That stalked each flitting peace,  
Oh, hurl your arrows at them, Rain,  
You Winds, bring my release!

### III.

O Drift, be love,—be flying light,  
A balm to aching gray,  
And fling thy curling banners wide  
That stoop to mine array.  
O flying Foam, O Spirit good,  
Bide in mine eyes awhile;  
Ye Elements, crush out all rage—  
Then heal me in your smile.



## WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND  
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

### THE PASSING OF THE BOSS

ONE does n't hear so much of political bosses as of yore. A few years ago the centre of reform fire was bosses and bossism. One of the most conspicuous tasks of the diligent muck-raker was to ferret out this political *bête noire* and expose him to the public view. There were municipal bosses, State bosses, and national bosses. There was no doubt about their activities and their relation to politics and public life. It was their business to keep in the background as much as possible and pull the strings, quietly but effectively.

Almost any one, with but a moment's reflection, can easily name a half-dozen bosses who, a few years ago, flourished and whose names were political by-words. The bosses of various cities and States were better known than their duly elected representatives. But one by one these have gradually disappeared. Some of them have died; some have been deposed as the result of a direct fight upon them; and some have sunk out of sight or lost their power through changed conditions and altered sentiment.

There are two explanations for this. The first is that the publicity which has been given to bosses and the boss system has so changed the political machinery and aroused the people to an active interest in public affairs as to make the office of boss impossible and unprofitable. Another explanation might be that the non-existence of bosses is more apparent than real; that while the old bosses have been put out of business simply because they had become too well known, new bosses have taken their place and are quietly at work, but without the knowledge of the public.

This latter explanation may, indeed, be valid in some localities, but, as a general rule, the first explanation is the correct one. Any one can see that the politics of neither of the old parties, in these confused and strenuous days, is run with that oily smoothness which one expects when the political machinery is under the domination of a single shrewd and positive will. When bosses are in control, slates are made up long in advance, and one can be morally certain that the slates made up by the bosses are the ones that go through, even though they are slightly modified here and there by unforeseen exigencies.

Perhaps it is the bosses that are dead, not the idea of bossism. Perhaps a sufficient time has not elapsed to grow up a new race to replace the old ones. Perhaps out of the present chaos will arise others who will gather up the reins and drive off with master hand. That remains to be seen. The present fact, however, is that an unusually large number of powerful figures have disappeared from the local and national political arenas within a very short time, and it may require another wave of muck-raking to discover the real situation.

ELLIS O. JONES

## SCIENCE AND THE THEATRE

**I**N New York City all save three of the fifty-two theatres are to be without orchestral bodies during the season of 1912-'13. The majority of the forty-nine playhouses are installing a device known as the Unit Orchestra, which is nothing else than a scientific development of the pipe-organ, wherein all of the string, reed, and brass families of instruments are scientifically operated without the musician in the flesh, save one lone player at the console.

Throughout the country a similar state of affairs is in order, while in the various summer resorts one may find that where heretofore singers and musicians have had a lucrative field of endeavor, the entertainments are now almost wholly provided through scientific simulation of the living performer.

This is so true that the most important theatrical magnates have capitulated to the unquestioned encroachment of modern artifice on the realm of Thespis. The Shuberts, Klaw and Erlanger, Al H. Woods, William A. Brady, and Henry W. Savage are all investing heavily in the motion-picture industry, realizing as they do that another such disastrous theatrical season as the season of 1911-'12 has been would bankrupt even the wealthiest of them. Hence the new season will witness the spectacle of New York's ultra-swell home of grand opera, the Metropolitan Opera House, as the temple of the silent drama, for here is to be presented "The

Miracle," the sumptuous Reinhardt spectacle which has for months been the reigning sensation at the London Colosseum.

The gentlemen who have for years been catering to the public's entertainment were wont to regard these photo-play productions as a temporary craze, but when they saw the New York Theatre packed to the doors at regular theatre prices to see the Kinemacolor offerings on the screen, and when they found that the fashionable Lyceum Theatre had drawn six thousand dollars a week to the box-office with motion pictures, they were quick to affiliate themselves with the film industry. And now comes Daniel Frohman, the dean of managers, at the head of a company capitalized at half a million, which has for its object the production of high-grade plays on the screen, with the world's greatest players enrolled in the casts.

Mr. Frohman's inaugural production is to be "Elizabeth," the latest Bernhardt success, with the divine Sarah herself in the title rôle; and already it is announced that Madame Nazimova, James K. Hackett, Edward H. Sothorn, and Blanche Walsh are to follow the lead of Nat C. Goodwin, who has achieved added fame and greater fortune through the perpetuation of his artistry through the production of "Oliver Twist" as a photo-play, with the comedian himself as *Fagin*.

After all, it is the actor and musician in the flesh who make possible the success of these scientific inventions, for the players and singers themselves are absolutely necessary for the original records, whether they be vocal, instrumental, or pantomimic. Some of the more celebrated of these have already amassed great fortunes as a result of the vogue of their art as reproduced by the phonograph, the player-piano, and the moving picture.

ROBERT GRAU

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## TABLE-TOURISTS

THE time is now upon us when a favored few of our countrymen and countrywomen are returning from their travels about Europe on a glorious summer vacation, while the rest of us have remained at home, having received from time to time a haphazard picture post-card of a Swiss lake or a Venetian canal, bearing the inspiring legend, "Weather is fine. Wish you were with us. Do write often." Half a dozen such postals, a letter telling of an atrocious passage across the Channel (as if we cared!), a souvenir spoon or a paper-cutter from Sorrento, and, for us, the incident is closed.

In earlier and more hopeful years we had expected, on the return of friends from abroad, to reap a splendid harvest of facts and fancies when we sat, breathless with interest, to hear of the actuality of places

we loved, though we never had seen them, and never expected to see them with any but the inward eye. "Did you walk the streets that Shakespeare walked?" we asked eagerly. "Were the hedgerows of England abloom? Did you cross over London Bridge from the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and blank into the days when Chaucer and his fellow-pilgrims rode through the green meadows of Kent down to Canterbury? Did you think of the bold Vikings when you took ship at Dover? (Never mind if you were seasick; we don't care about that!) When you went through the St. Gothard tunnel did you think of how Hannibal, greatest of generals, crossed the snowy passes above you? Did the stones of the Roman Forum reëcho to you Cornelia's pride in her splendid sons, or Cicero's sonorous denunciations, or Antony's impassioned words over Cæsar dead and turned to clay? Did you sail the Ægean sea with the intrepid Ulysses or swim the Hellespont with the amorous Leander? Did you strain your eyes across the Mediterranean to catch a glimpse of the site of Carthage, proud sea-mother of old? Did you turn toward Cleopatra, afloat on the Nile like a vivid lotus flower? What, did n't you do or see or think or feel any of these things? Then, for heaven's sake, what *did* you do?

It is almost unbelievable written down baldly in black and white, but our favored friends began by eating (or not eating, according to the weather) some half-dozen meals a day on the liner; they consumed roast beef at the Hotel Cecil and unsalted butter at the A.B.C. restaurants in London; they nibbled gooseberry tarts at picturesque inns in the Lake Country; they sipped wines at little tables on the Parisian boulevards; they ate Swiss cheeses in view of Mont Blanc, and macaroni *au gratin* (or *au* something else) under the eternal cloud that overhangs Vesuvius; they sampled Hymettan honey where Leonidas held the Pass; and drank innumerable cups of coffee under the inscrutable brows and immutable lips of the Sphinx herself. They started out, you will remember, with itineraries; they return with menus. They "did" Europe, in fact, not so much with Baedekers as with knives and forks. And while they bewail atrocious tips, at bottom we cannot but feel that they are proud to have eaten so frequently and so fervently as to have carried their tip-totals "up into the hundreds."

Is this all they have to tell? Yes, this is the sum and substance of their discourse, from which they cannot be sidetracked. If you ask the merits of various cathedrals, they give you comparative lists of prices at inns. Was the Scotch heather beautiful? Yes, but dinners at Edinburgh were invariably served cold. Did Washington Irving do justice to Granada? They suppose so, but the Spanish wines are n't fit to drink.

But you can eat at home, you remind them reproachfully. They turn upon you at once. "'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous,

there shall be no more cakes and ale?' 'Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?' Are not 'bread and the circus' mutually interdependent?" Ah, when they come to die, these unimaginative travellers, and owe, perchance, a "cock to Æsculapius," will it be combed and spurred, with glossy neck and proud strut, a splendid, living barnyard hero? Rather, I think, Æsculapius will receive his due upon a platter, browned to a turn, stuffed delectably, and basted with an unctuous gravy. *Price, six marks, wines not included.*

HELEN COALE CREW

### THE SELFISHNESS OF CELEBRITIES

CONSIDERING the progress we are making in good manners and courtesy, it seems singular that the selfishness of celebrities should still continue; although it is but just to state that the influence of our good manners may apply only to new celebrities.

In reading over Mr. Pulitzer's career in a recent magazine issue, one is astonished at the care this great man took to preserve himself from any unnecessary intrusion. His immense talents may have made these precautions a matter of duty; yet it is nevertheless true that in order to accomplish this result he achieved enormous areas of selfishness, and—as his biographer intimates—he was correspondingly unhappy. That blindness does not necessarily imply unhappiness is a fact very well known. Miss Helen Keller is a remarkable instance.

Tolstoi created many disturbances in his family, and his actions were provocative of much discomfort. He appeared to disregard utterly the feelings of those about him.

Wagner is another instance of intense egotism, in which many people were involved and suffered accordingly.

Even our own Mark Twain cannot be absolved from this charge. Mr. Clemens united with many lovable qualities an apparent lack of understanding with regard to how his actions might affect other people.

The truth is, that character seems to be undesirable in a genius; or, in fact, in any man who has talent above the common. A man who has inherited talents may start out with a fairly good character, but in his process of development his character seems gradually to be eliminated. He becomes, as Weininger puts it, unmoral. When a man is unmoral in the highest degree and talented in the highest degree, he has reached the *summum bonum* of human perfection so far as genius is concerned—and about the last stage of imperfection so far as human companionship and citizenship are concerned.

THOMAS L. MASSON